FOSTERING MEDIA DIVERSITY IN LIBRARIES

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Prepared by the American Library Association, Intellectual Freedom Committee
Subcommittee on the Impact of Media Concentration on Libraries
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INTRODUCTION

In June 2003, the American Library Association (ALA) passed a resolution deploring the Federal Communications Commission's actions changing media ownership rules that encourage further concentration of the media. The resolution also called on the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) to examine the impact of media mergers on intellectual freedom, access to information, and diversity of opinion in local communities. The IFC Subcommittee on the Impact of Media Concentration on Libraries elicited comments from the library community about the problem and then determined that libraries can best counter the effects of media consolidation by increasing awareness of its impact and identifying innovative ways to provide materials, information, and services that foster media diversity in libraries.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide libraries, library consortia, and library networks with a centralized list of strategies and actions to help them fulfill one of their key responsibilities: to provide access to a diverse collection of resources and services.[1] Throughout the document, special attention is given to the acquisition of and access to small, independent, and alternative sources—including locally produced and international ones—in all formats: print, AV media, and electronic. These sources in

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[1] While the term diversity implies difference, experts have found the concept difficult to define or measure with any precision. In Europe, media diversity generally refers to the promotion of culture (national identity) and the protection of cultural heritage. Diversity of culture, content, and sources are all presented as aspects of media pluralism. Internal pluralism aims at ensuring that a wide range of values find expression within a single media organization. External pluralism aims at ensuring the maintenance of many media organizations and sources, each expressing a particular viewpoint. Political pluralism focuses on a range of political views represented in the media, while cultural pluralism is about the need to represent a variety of cultures that reflect the diversity within a society. Media pluralism is safeguarded through European policy instruments that regulate licensing, ownership, access, and programming. Not so in the United States, where First Amendment protections preclude intervention with respect to content. Instead, policy makers grapple with a regulatory regime that aims toward media diversity, but relies primarily on the marketplace for direction. For several years, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) has convened a Federal Advisory Committee on Diversity in Communications in the Digital Age to recommend policies related to ownership and other issues. As part of this effort, the FCC has identified five types of diversity: viewpoint diversity, outlet diversity, program diversity, source diversity, and female/minority ownership. For libraries, it is useful to consider these various approaches to defining and measuring diversity when reviewing policies and practices. ALA's "Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*" (Adopted 1982, amended 1990, and reviewed 2005) focuses primarily on viewpoint diversity. Many other ALA policies and practices, however, deal with all of these notions.

particular, including *open access*, collaboratively produced and other free Internet sources, have the potential to counteract the influence and consequences resulting from increased concentration of media ownership that affects all types of libraries.

The actions proposed in this document offer numerous approaches to countering the negative effects of media concentration and to promoting the growing, yet often less powerful, body of small, independent and alternative sources of information. Each library will need to decide which actions are most appropriate and realistic to meeting its goals within budgetary and space constraints. The actions are presented as a means to reach a goal common to all libraries: providing access to a diverse collection of resources and services.

Background

A primary mission of libraries is to provide a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities they serve. Through this mission, they celebrate and preserve the ideals of a democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, outlets, programs, and sources, in order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in today's information society. Citizens increasingly need civic spaces–physical and virtual—where they are welcome to speak freely, discern different perspectives, share similar interests and concerns, and pursue what they believe is in their and the public's interest. Libraries serve that civic role, making knowledge, ideas, and information available to all citizens and by serving as the public source for the pursuit of independent thought, critical attitudes, and in-depth information. As limited public forums, libraries have "a privileged and influential position regarding the provision of access to information by the citizenry."[2] And they serve as pivotal community institutions upholding, strengthening and realizing fundamental democratic ideals.

A central purpose of the First Amendment is to protect marginal views. In order to do this, libraries must embrace their role of creating, collecting and preserving diverse information resources. Over the years, the American Library Association (ALA) has developed and endorsed numerous policies guided by the Library Bill of Rights, a statement rooted in the First Amendment, that affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas and that they should "provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues." Furthermore, they should not exclude items "because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation."

With growing concentration of media ownership, independent voices decrease and locally produced and locally relevant information, news, and cultural resources diminish. Libraries cannot ensure "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources[3]," unless they counter the detrimental impact of media consolidation on the diversity of ideas and localism in their communities. When media consolidation restricts the creation and dissemination of multiple perspectives, the public no longer has a healthy, open exchange of information and ideas. In an era when democratic discourse is more essential than ever, the information system is out of

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[2] Barbara Jones, *Libraries, Access and Intellectual Freedom.*(Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1999) 12-13.[3] Associated Press v. United Stat*es*, 326 U.S. 1, 20 (1945).

balance. Libraries must provide forums–both physical and virtual–that create opportunities for individuals to engage in the open and balanced exchange of viewpoints and ideas.

New technologies and market innovations now enable the distribution of more specialized content, creating what Chris Anderson calls the "long tail".[4] Instead of a mass production push system, an emerging pull economy allows niche products to coexist with best sellers, providing important openings for institutions like libraries to fulfill their unique responsibility and obligation to provide a forum for unheard voices. As librarians become more aware of the challenges and opportunities surrounding media consolidation and its impact locally, they are devising new strategies to ensure broader access to a diversity of resources. In addition to reviewing their selection and organization policies, they are using new technologies to create and preserve knowledge and deploying new methods to promote media literacy and teach critical thinking skills. Given that the mainstream media are consolidating and the alternative voices are ever smaller and less commercialized, librarians must no longer depend on traditional, passive approaches to acquisition. They must be vigilant and assertive in seeking out alternative voices. In short, libraries must assume an active leadership role if they are to ensure access to a broad spectrum of ideas. Otherwise, they will abrogate their responsibility to guarantee free expression and promote the public interest in the digital age.

I. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The development and management of responsive collections is a central obligation of librarians and library workers. The quality of a library's services and programs is directly dependent on the strength of the collection. Thus, it is essential that the collection fully reflects the needs and interests of the library's community of users, and furthermore, that the library staff is proactive in anticipating needs and acquiring the diverse and often unique resources necessary to meet these needs. Building collections and providing access to materials in different formats produced by independent, small, and local producers helps to ensure that multiple voices, perspectives, and ideas are represented in the collection.

First and foremost, libraries should implement collection development and management policies and practices that foster this goal. The selection, acquisition, cataloging and organization of materials, in particular, have a profound impact on the richness, quality, and perceived relevance of a library's collection. Librarians should adopt collection development and selection policies that have clear, unambiguous guidelines for developing balanced, diverse collections. While there are numerous popular tools that identify and review materials from mainstream media outlets, librarians need to consult additional sources to obtain information about lesser-known materials. Practices such as vendor selection, ordering procedures, subscription decisions, and license agreement negotiations should reflect the goal of building a diverse collection of materials and media. Likewise, the cataloging and organization of materials should facilitate access to the full range of resources acquired by a library. The strategies

[4] Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail (*New York: Hyperion, 2006).

discussed and outlined in the following sections are designed to promote a comprehensive and inclusive approach to collection development and management.

Collection Building

The framework and vision for developing a responsive, diverse, high quality library collection necessitates well articulated selection policies and guidelines. Such policies and guidelines should incorporate the characteristics and features outlined in the strategies listed below.

Actions

- Prepare and revise collection development and selection policies that articulate the importance of a diverse collection of resources and provide specific guidelines that reflect this vision
- Promote a diversity of sources, outlets, and viewpoints essential to an informed citizenry and a robust marketplace of ideas
- Ensure that selection criteria promote the need for lesser-known sources that may or may not be reviewed
- Commit to diversifying the library's collection even more
- Assign library staff to monitor new small/independent/alternative press titles and make recommendations for the collection
- Review, select, and showcase titles from small/independent/alternative media producers.
- Preserve, organize and distribute alternative media resources
- Acquire and support *open access* publications
- Encourage and include a diversity of sources and viewpoints in institutional repositories and locally digitized collections
- Develop selection criteria that recognize the need to acquire alternative sources of information, including blogs, wikis, and other emerging digital resources as they become available
- Train staff in the importance of including alternative sources of information in the collection

Acquisitions

Collection development and selection policies serve primarily to articulate a vision for the library's collection. At the same time, library acquisition practices are the nuts and bolts that translate policies into reality. Libraries should develop and review acquisition procedures on a regular basis to ascertain their effectiveness and timeliness in identifying and acquiring diverse materials and sources of information. Libraries need to consider issues related to purchasing options, budget allocations, and vendor selection and performance.

Actions

- Commit a target percentage of the book budget for materials out of the mainstream and foreign publications
- Seek out supplemental funds to purchase additional materials out of the mainstream, e.g., from the library's Friends group

- Encourage distributors to include more diverse media producers in their approval plans and inventories
- Review approval plan profiles to ensure that they identify and procure a diversity of media
- Order from and pay small/independent publishers quickly and directly, especially when their materials are not readily available from library distributors
- Encourage small/independent/alternative producers to offer bulk discounts or preferential rates for multi-branch library systems, library consortia, and library networks
- Obtain public performance rights that allow groups to show small/independent/alternative films, and also buy films for personal or face-toface classroom use not requiring rights clearance, which are thus less expensive
- Facilitate the acquisition of local materials and publications not commonly acquired by libraries to provide greater and sustainable access to the public
- Distribute guides to help small/independent/alternative media producers work effectively with libraries
- Produce guides to help librarians work with small/independent/alternative media producers
- Establish standing orders with independent presses and media producers

Cataloging and Issues of Access

User-centered cataloging and classification practices help to facilitate access to library collections. It is important to pay particular attention to the procurement and cataloging of small/independent/alternative sources of information, and commit to the timely processing of these materials. The strategies listed below help to encourage ready, equal, and equitable access to all the resources in a library's collection.

Actions
- Implement collection building policies and practices that place a high priority on the acquisition and cataloging of diverse sources of information
- Place a high priority on the cataloging of alternative/ independent/ small media resources, as they are not typically represented in shared cataloging databases
- Use subject headings that reflect ideas in small/independent/alternative media materials
- Lobby the Library of Congress to adopt or revise headings which are missing or misleading
- Include the holdings of local unique libraries and information centers in library catalogs
- Utilize collection-specific cataloging approaches to describe and extend access to special collections
- Use *folksonomies* and portable and free or *open access social bookmarks*

Electronic Resources and Technologies

Collection building practices that assure access to sources of electronic information help libraries represent the increasingly diverse spectrum of perspectives and

formats offered. While the trend toward group purchases and bundled packages of databases presents libraries with hard-to-resist savings, they should encourage the inclusion of more diverse sources in these packages, and in their collections overall. Libraries cannot ignore the growing importance and influence of new and emerging interactive social media such as blogs, social networks, and wikis that have quickly gained a foothold in the culture and are popular with many users. .

The selection and use of information technologies to access, organize, and manage the library's electronic resources also impacts the quality and richness of a collection. Although one of their core values is free and open access to information, libraries may overlook the conceptual foundations and design features of technologies that are available to access and distribute the information they collect. In the name of convenience, libraries often adopt proprietary technology for their OPACs and other library systems that lock them into expensive license agreements and inflexible software and management systems.

One prominent example is *open source* systems. Open source systems, which emerged in the mid-1980s, challenge more traditional software concepts. The term *open source* refers to software in which the source code is freely available for others to view, modify, and use. Free/open source software (FOSS) is developed and maintained by a community of developers that crosses various communities and national boundaries rather than a single corporation. As such, FOSS has openness and the concept of access to information embedded in its structure and design. Because open source software is becoming increasingly robust, libraries no longer need to rely solely on expensive proprietary software. Free access to information is inherent in these technologies. Information systems and technology applications that incorporate these features help libraries build diverse digital collections.

Actions
- Avoid sole or over reliance on such mainstream Web-accessible information sources as widely available commercial databases, federated search engines, and periodical finders
- Purchase databases that provide access to alternative and international as well as mainstream titles
- Negotiate and sign license agreements and contracts that enable *open access* and guarantee user rights such as fair use and first sale sharing of copyrighted works Identify, evaluate, acquire, and promote access to high quality free, inexpensive, and independent databases, periodicals, websites, blogs, electronic newsletters, RSS feeds, podcasts, shareware, wikis, free e-texts and e-media, and other electronic information sources, especially those from small, local, governmental, non-profit, independent, and non-mainstream sources
- Feature small/independent/alternative media resources on the same database pages with commercial databases
- Discover and utilize multiple ways (e.g., e-pathfinders) to promote these resources to users
- Feature access to free websites and services which enable users to locate, buy, borrow, read online, acquire, or print public domain, hard to find, and out-of-print books and other media

• Promote access to a variety of free websites that enable the creation, sharing, and remixing of knowledge, music, video, and other art
• Feature access to the Internet Archive, which provides access to the Internet of the past, including library catalogs and censored pages otherwise inaccessible
• Educate and train users in media, information, and other 21st century literacies
• Streamline access to free and independent databases along with commercial ones through federated searches, periodical finders, staff picks, and other website marketing devices
• Encourage and request database aggregators to include small/independent/alternative resources in their packages, specifying sources that will be most useful to your community
• Utilize free open source software
• Support the development of open source library applications
• Serve as a local community resource regarding technology, including open source applications
• Offer space for local LINUX and UNIX user group meetings
• Enhance access to open source software and other technology resources
• Ensure permanent public access and ownership of electronic materials
• Acquire archival copies of licensed digital content

Reference Collections

Reference sources are often the first and most frequently used collection in a library. These sources, which typically include indexes, databases, and bibliographies, play a unique role as gateways to other materials. As such they become a critical means for providing users with access to alternative and diverse sources of information.

Actions
• Increase access to sources that include small/independent/alternative media producers by purchasing relevant reference tools, such as indexes, databases, bibliographies, and other sources
• Create in-house guides and pathfinders that include diverse sources to information
• Encourage index and abstract companies and content aggregators to include more diverse media titles in their databases
• Urge the public to pursue public domain materials and offer to guide them in their use of these sources
• Develop an awareness of small, independent and alternative media producers and keep track of new resources worthy of purchase for reference

Children's Collections

Normal intellectual and emotional development moves children from the limited perspectives of infancy to an increasing awareness and understanding of others. Like all normal development, however, this requires experience. While it is a truism to say "all children deserve to see themselves reflected in their books," it is not enough. To develop empathy and become responsible members of a multicultural society, children also need authentic, appealing portrayals of others. Consolidation of media tends to limit the range

of such portrayals. It increases pressure to use children's media for product placement and to repeat commercially successful formulae, and it threatens support for material that portrays children in homes with nontraditional lifestyles—or even in homes where many products cannot be afforded.

<u>Actions</u>
- Purchase a diversity of media materials for young people
- Consider small/independent/alternative media materials as award-winners
- Make producers of alternative media materials aware of standard reviewing tools and awards, and usual procedures for nomination
- Create and improve active reviewing tools for non-book children's media, including web sites
- Give children opportunities to engage with people from different backgrounds, and to apply the perceptions of good literature in their own lives by offering a diverse range of children's programming

Young Adult Collections

Young adults and teenagers need space they can call their own—a space that is inviting, enriching and safe. In order for them to feel at home in and continue to use their school and public libraries, they must feel welcome and encouraged to put their stamp of ownership on the library's collection and indeed, the library as a whole.

Having grown up with the Internet, teenagers are far more likely to have knowledge of a wide array of cultures. Familiarity breaks down prejudice and by using and exploring the Internet teens can expand their social circles far outside their immediate realm. For some teens, the library is the only technology source available to them, going beyond a general source of information to the ultimate social networking site. As such, unfiltered Internet access is necessary in order to sustain this exploration.

The main question a teenager is asking is "Who am I?" Two ways they define themselves are through what they read and what they create. By sharing their reading and ideas with others, they can begin to answer that question. In order for teens to feel that their library is really their own, they must see themselves reflected in their literature and be encouraged to create and interact with library materials, including print, media, and electronic resources.

<u>Actions</u>
- Develop a diverse collection of traditional and new format materials of interest to young adults
- Encourage young people to exchange ideas using library collections, programs, and services
- Provide space for teen writers and artists to interact and to publish their own writing via a library-sponsored blog
- Display young people's photographs through exhibits or online photo galleries at sites such as Flickr or Photo Bucket
- Acquire CDs created by local musicians, especially music created by students
- Subscribe to local school newspapers and similar publications

- Maintain a collection of school yearbooks
- Create a collection of zines and offer programs on how to create zines

Government Information

The public's access to government information is the foundation of a democratic society. Libraries have a long history of providing access to government information, particularly through its participation in the Federal Depository Library Program. This role is changing as government information is increasingly available in electronic format and commercial vendors provide sophisticated interface overlays with the goal of improving searching and access options. As this trend becomes more prominent, libraries need to promote their unique role in making federal, state, and local e-government information and services available, along with assistance from knowledgeable staff. The library's web site can offer a starting point to accessing government information on the web. This, combined with the library's print collections, can be a vital nexus to informed citizens.

Actions
- Showcase government information as an essential information tool
- Work with government and other local officials to satisfy the public's right to know
- Promote local freedom of information and sunshine laws
- Teach civic literacy skills that raise awareness about government information and services
- Work with local governments to ensure access to and preservation of local ordinances and similar information
- Showcase and present local government information for the benefit of the community
- Maintain data that help inform voters

Community Information

Libraries serve an important role as community information centers, creating a local information environment that is essential to civic engagement, cultural enrichment, government services, and emergency preparedness. They gather, collect, organize, manage and preserve, as well as create content by and about the local community. Most libraries also maintain unique items and collections of local or regional significance. Since the loss of local history can easily occur without institutional support, libraries should recognize their responsibility for developing and maintaining such collections, especially in communities that lack local historical societies or museums. Further, without ongoing institutional support, existing local history and special materials collections can become hidden collections at greater risk of loss, unchecked deterioration, and theft. Although the problem is national, the solutions need to be local.

<u>Actions</u>
- Encourage the public to understand and participate in the shaping of local issues
- Collaborate with the community to design and plan library buildings and services that enable and assist local residents to prevent, manage, and recover from long and short term disasters.
- Serve as a repository of information about the local community, its people, and its history, in order to foster a unique community identity
- Collect local government and other information so residents can find pertinent facts and other information about their communities
- Produce local information and referral databases and make them freely available on the library's web site
- Address the special concerns of rural communities and their libraries
- Digitize and preserve materials that are unique to a local community
- Provide sufficient content and services that address the civic needs and interests of local communities (i.e., localism)
- Purchase and showcase materials that represent the cultural diversity of local communities
- Identify hidden or unique collections
- Seek out and maintain unique local materials, especially ephemera and other primary resources
- Cultivate community awareness to support local collections
- Build partnerships with individual and institutional donors, private foundations, and local businesses
- Conduct public awareness campaigns focusing on subject content interests and the potential loss of vital local stories and histories
- Create a plan for policy statements that describe the scope of collecting, materials identifying, cultivating sources, staffing, and sustainability
- Provide administrative support at the highest level for unique and local collections
- Retain original items that are reformatted or archivally copied
- Build special collections that include alternative, independent, small press media materials
- Prioritize the preservation of materials from alternative media producers
- Reformat materials to increase access to local history, including oral history
- Create analog preservation copies to ensure longevity
- Work to preserve access to materials that cannot be regularly circulated or viewed for reasons of age, scarcity, or other reasons
- Create copies to assure that materials are accessible by the public; preserve originals in an archive

Knowledge Creation
In the digital age, the roles of libraries have changed to embrace new opportunities for facilitating and shaping content, communication, and collaboration. Today, librarians compile and distribute data, create web sites and blogs, select and reformat publications, add descriptive metadata, digitize unpublished materials, provide new tools for the collection, dissemination and preservation of knowledge, and foster creative production

by members of their communities. As libraries venture from their more traditional role as stewards of collections into the realm of creating and sustaining knowledge, they are facilitating the creation of dynamic publications, incorporating *peer reviews*, commentary, and dialogue. Many communities are seeing a burgeoning of local user content online. Others are developing new means to control information through such vehicles as *institutional repositories* and serving as formal distributors of publications. Particularly noteworthy initiatives include the MIT Library's *D-Space*, the University of California's *California Digital Library*, and Stanford University Libraries' *HighWire Press*. These emerging roles position the library as catalyst working in collaboration with other stakeholders on the processes of knowledge creation. Libraries can take advantage of this new realm of content production by making available a more diverse array of resources that includes local materials.

Actions
- Encourage peer production of information
- Use *Creative Commons* or other less restrictive licenses that encourage *open access* to information
- Establish *digital repositories* for institutional, subject, and individual community and other information
- Collect, organize, and publish unique community information
- Partner with organizations to create, process, distribute, and preserve content
- Adopt tools to create dynamic information resources
- Provide technology and technology-based forums that foster community access, conversation and learning
- Establish social networking accounts to foster broader participation online communities

II. LIBRARY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Libraries play a vital role in promoting and providing access to information for all individuals and groups within a community. As public institutions, libraries not only have the capacity, but also the responsibility, to eliminate the economic, language, physical, and educational barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing the information they need. These barriers (and others) are diminished when libraries create free, public spaces – physical and virtual – where individuals can locate, read, view, and utilize information central to their lives. Libraries are also in a unique position to acquire and make available resources that reflect the often unheard voices of underserved populations. A library's responsibility to build collections that present a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives, in fact, necessitates a proactive approach to identifying and acquiring sources of information that may fall outside mainstream media outlets. Libraries also need to assure that users have access to the growing body of digital resources at no cost, an important role for libraries that counteracts increasing trends toward fee-based information sources marketed to the public in growing numbers. Library buildings also serve a valuable community function by providing free space for groups to meet, learn, and use the resources of the library. In many cases the library is the only or primary agency that is both affordable and relevant to segments of the user community with special/unique needs. To fulfill this essential role, a library needs to

maintain a high level of engagement with the various user populations within its constituency.

As stewards of the human record, the library should also collaborate with individuals, groups, and organizations to assure that materials created by individuals from underserved populations within a community are preserved for future generations. Libraries, more than most other community institutions, have the facilities, equipment, and knowledge to fulfill this stewardship role for the community.

Actions
- Collaborate with small/independent/alternative media outlets and other cultural institutions in the community (e.g., PEG and PBS stations, college and independent radio, and museums)
- Serve as an information commons where local citizens can exchange, share, and understand each others' unique cultural viewpoints
- Showcase alternative producers at programs, book parties, and lectures
- Include small/independent/alternative producers in bibliographies, exhibits, and other public endeavors
- Collaborate with local teachers, agencies, and groups (like book or parenting groups) to discover their needs and suggestions and encourage them to include in their reading and viewing lists, curricula, and programs the **most relevant** nonmainstream titles your library has or can collect.
- Utilize low power radio to broadcast events at the library
- Provide opportunities for the public to deliberate about issues of common concern
- Work with the library's outreach services, programming, and marketing departments to assure awareness and coordination of available resources among the targeted groups
- Create feedback mechanisms, such as focus groups or citizens' advisory panels, to help meet changing needs
- Train staff to be aware of and sensitive to disabilities which afflict many citizens
- Reach out to local providers of services to individuals with disabilities
- Meet with leaders of local ethnic groups to build relationships, encourage awareness of and use of the library, and gain understanding of the groups' needs in terms of the library
- Hire library staff with knowledge and/or language skills relevant to the population, and who have a commitment to serving the population
- Understand and respond to the fact that different neighborhoods may vary significantly in their ethnic composition, and that this composition is dynamic over time

Reference and User Services
Libraries increasingly aim to be as self-service as possible, with the idea that staff time can be saved for more essential duties. Reference and user services are what we are saving that time for. Without a librarian who knows the full spectrum of diverse resources and how they interrelate, without a librarian to conduct an expert reference interview to help users understand how to fill their needs, without a librarian to find resources to fill needs in a timely fashion at the right intellectual level, much of the

library collection may go unused, and many user needs may go unfilled. If libraries are to help users access a diversity of resources, reference services need to be excellent and readily available.

<u>Actions</u>
- Provide service to users through a variety of new technological means, and continue to support traditional face-to-face and telephone reference and readers' advisory services without which many users will not find what they want and need.
- Support ongoing training to improve the librarian's ability to know and teach others to utilize the full spectrum of library resources—print, AV, and electronic.
- Proactively seek to recognize when a user—or a class of users—might need help and offer to meet them at their own level.
- Provide excellent 24/7 reference services, especially when the library is closed, recognizing their limitations. Since they are often done remotely, they are usually limited to web-accessible info and may overlook parts of the local library's physical collection, its website, and the expertise of its local librarians.

Library Instruction and 21st Century Literacy

Librarians in all type of libraries now teach 21st century skills—including information, media, visual, civic, and cultural literacy—in order to help their constituents make effective use of information in all formats and think critically about content and its delivery across old and new media. Today, this teaching role is essential as people face a bewildering world of information overload without the intervention of a mediator like a librarian. Standards developed by both school and academic librarians stress critical thinking as well as awareness of the economic, legal, ethical and social issues surrounding the use of information. Programs incorporating these standards can raise awareness about the value of access to a diversity of ideas. With such diverse communities, librarians can best serve the full range of training needs by responding to different learning styles through a variety of presentation styles.

<u>Actions</u>
- Incorporate a diversity of media sources into library instruction sessions when appropriate and direct users to these sources as part of the individual instruction/interview process
- Teach media literacy and critical thinking skills as part of the library instruction program
- Develop indicators to assess 21st century skills and competencies that include measures of the public's ability to recognize the effects of diminished media diversity

- Incorporate diverse media resources into 21st century learning curricula.
- Design different presentation formats for a variety of learning styles
- Collaborate and partner with educators and other community groups to build and promote 21st century literacy skills

•   Educate library colleagues about the economic, legal, ethical, and social issues surrounding the use of information, including the impact of media consolidation on the diversity of ideas

IV. THE LIBRARY PROFESSION AS AN ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

Library use is increasing and libraries and librarians are more necessary than ever. Nevertheless, the continued relevance of libraries is still questioned. Intense competition for public and institutional dollars makes it crucial that librarians garner public support to maintain and expand library and information programs. Libraries play a role like no other institution in our democracy, yet they are not always able to communicate that uniqueness. The challenge is to capture the public's imagination by fostering an understanding of the value of libraries and librarians to our democracy. In an age when the public sphere is under attack, librarians must stand in defense of the public's right to know and promote free expression and access to a diversity of ideas. No one else will stand up with the same conviction, with the same dedication, with the same determination to protect and promote the public's right to access a diversity of ideas.

Actions
•   Promote the library as an important source for a diversity of ideas unavailable from the mainstream media
•   Position the library as an entity that promotes the sharing of ideas
•   Observe Media Democracy Day, Freedom of Information Day, Sunshine Week, Constitution Day, Banned Books Week, and similar annual events that call attention to freedom of information and democratic participation
•   Advocate on behalf of the public's right to access public information and promote local freedom of information laws and sunshine acts
•   Encourage efforts to preserve and protect the library as a civic space that is part of a vibrant public sphere
•   Partner with organizations that advocate for alternative publishing ventures, like the **Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition** (SPARC) and The Information Access Alliance

Library Research
There is a rich academic literature on media consolidation and its impact on citizens' access to diverse information resources, but this literature lacks references to libraries. Accordingly, library scholars need to take a more active role in studying this issue. Librarians have rightly discussed media industry mergers and acquisitions and their deleterious effect on journal prices. That discussion needs to be expanded to a consideration of the impact of shrinking access to a wide variety of diverse information resources on the public's capacity to be informed citizens and participants in the democratic process.

Actions
•   Conduct studies on the impact of conglomeration and document harm to the free flow of ideas
•   Identify gaps in collections and services

- Study the impact of user instruction programs on critical thinking and information access
- Explore and report on ways to diversify collections and services

Library Associations

Library associations like ALA offer librarians and library supporters a public voice to speak out on behalf of the millions of people who use libraries every year. They provide the vehicle to assess policies, take positions, build partnerships and coalitions, lobby policy makers and advocate for a free and open information society. ALA's structure facilitates political action by teaching members about the issues, evaluating choices, drafting principles, deliberating about alternatives, and negotiating a public stance. It also provides the public relations support to develop a unified message and reach out to the media. For decades, ALA has established itself as a credible, well-respected player in the political arena. The persistent and consistent voice of librarians working together through their professional associations can compete for and win the battle to shape the nation's information policy in the public interest. In the digital age, librarians, library workers, trustees, friends, and users in every community must speak out and lead the charge for public access to a diversity of ideas.

Actions
- Encourage professional library associations to promote a diversity of media producers
- Feature diverse media producers more prominently in advertising and exhibits and offer more programs about these resources at conferences
- Mainstream discussions about small/independent/alternative publishers and producers within ALA and other library associations
- Sponsor programs that focus on media concentration and ways libraries can counter the effects

Legislative Advocacy

As far back as 1919, the American Library Association recognized the importance of participation in the political process at the national, state and local levels. Over the past few decades, librarians have joined in a number of advocacy efforts to shape the media landscape. From children's and cable television to public broadcasting, librarians have spoken out for the public interest. In addition, they have promoted First Amendment and fair use rights, as well as information equity for all Americans. With the breakup of AT&T in 1984, ALA, eager to protect the public interest, responded by developing principles rather than endorsing particular positions. Over the next few decades, ALA served as a major voice for a free and open information society where a diversity of ideas was available to all. Although the Telecommunications Act of 1996 settled some of the debate over media ownership, the law opened up new battlegrounds for librarians, including controversies over bridging the digital divide and restricting Internet access. Subsequently, the law's emphasis on deregulation has resulted in even greater consolidation of the media industry, prompting public concern that the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) proposed 2003 rules would reduce media competition. In June 2003, ALA Council unanimously passed a resolution expressing

opposition to these changes in media rules, taking a firm public stand about the impact of media monopolies on access to a diversity of ideas. ALA and other library associations have also spoken out in opposition to mergers of scholarly publishers.

Actions
- Oppose changes in media ownership rules that encourage further concentration of the media
- Oppose copyright laws, regulations, rules, and practices that limit the public's access rights
- Support policies that strengthen and expand the public's information rights
- Demonstrate how libraries are impacted by media consolidation and their importance to countering its impact
- Support anti-trust actions against attempts by large media companies, including scholarly publishers, to merge
- Support laws and regulations that promote and preserve equitable and affordable acquisition, distribution, and transmittal costs, such as licensing fees, postal rates, cable fees and broadband fees for small, independent, alternative, and community media.
- Focus activism on antitrust issues, court cases, and regulatory actions, as well as legislation
- Partner with groups supporting more diverse media and opposing media consolidation and other policies that restrict the public's access to information

Intellectual Freedom Advocacy
The American Library Association's efforts to protect and promote intellectual freedom serve as a model for and inspiration to library groups throughout the U.S. and abroad. Part of the reason for ALA's success is its strong organizational support for this core value. Leading these efforts is ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), charged with recommending actions to safeguard the rights of library users, libraries, and librarians. ALA's statements and policies help guide members in their daily work and inform leaders when they speak on the Association's behalf. In addition to legislative efforts, ALA participates in litigation in support of libraries, including opposition to the Communications Decency Act and the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). After ALA Council passed a resolution opposing the FCC's proposed rules about media diversity in 2003, the IFC formed a subcommittee to assess the impact of media consolidation on libraries.

Actions
- Include media consolidation as a library intellectual freedom issue
- Educate librarians and others about the important role libraries play to ensure that communities have access to a diversity of information resources
- Join forces with groups who are speaking out about the impact of media conglomeration on intellectual freedom and the public's right to know
- Present the library as a public forum for diverse ideas

GLOSSARY

Creative Commons (CC) A nonprofit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative work available to others to share legally.

Digital Repository An organization that has responsibility for the long-term maintenance of digital resources, as well as for making them available to communities agreed on by the depositor and the repository.

Folksonomy Internet-based information retrieval method consisting of collaboratively created labels that catalog content such as web pages, online photographs, and web links. A folksonomic approach to metadata creation enables the personal classification (or tagging) of digital resources.

Institutional Repository A digital collection capturing and preserving the intellectual output of a single or multi-institutional community.

Open Access Resources that are openly available to users with no requirements for authentication or payment.

Open Source A program in which the source code is available to the general public for use and/or modification from its original design free of charge.

Peer Review The process by which scholarly articles are chosen to be included in a refereed journal. An editorial board consisting of experts in the author's field review the article and decide if it is authoritative enough for publication.

Social Bookmarking The practice of saving bookmarks to a public website and tagging them with keywords.

User-centered Catalog An online catalog that is born and assumes its form while it is consulted, and whose form is conditioned, if not determined, by its users.