

You are at: [ALA.org](#) » [News](#) » New State of America's Libraries Report finds shift in role of U.S. libraries

ALAnews

New State of America's Libraries Report finds shift in role of U.S. libraries

For Immediate Release
Sun, 04/12/2015

Contact:

Macey Morales
Manager Media Relations
PIO
mmorales@ala.org

CHICAGO — According to The State of America's Libraries Report released today by the American Library Association (ALA), academic, public and school libraries are experiencing a shift in how they are perceived by their communities and society. No longer just places for books, libraries of all types are viewed as anchors, centers for academic life and research and cherished spaces.

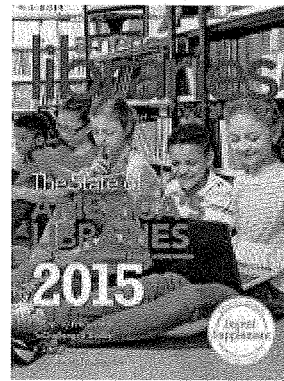
This and other library trends of the past year are detailed in ALA's State of America's Libraries Report 2015, made available during National Library Week, April 12–18, both as an American Libraries digital supplement, as well as on the ALA website at ala.org/americas-libraries and as a PDF file.

As society continues to change the way it consumes information, our nation's libraries, librarians and library workers continue to mirror the needs of their communities. From offering free technology workshops, small business centers and 24/7 virtual

 [Subscribe](#)

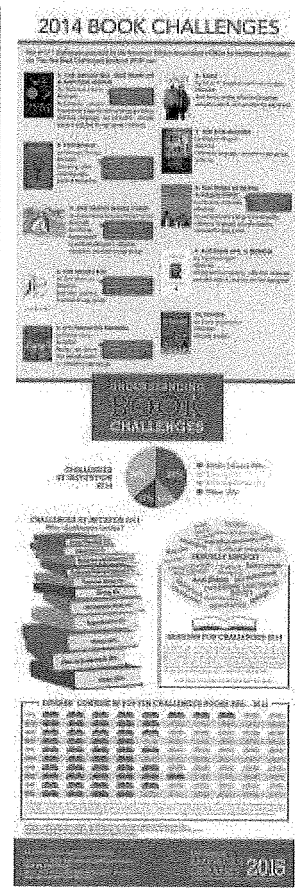
Download Images

(Click for full-size)



Public libraries and librarians are viewed as change agents by addressing unique needs and identifying trends that impact the community. The majority of public libraries offer neutral space for patrons, residents and students to discuss and resolve critical issues. For example the fatal shooting of Michael Brown brought chaos to Ferguson, Missouri. Protests divided residents and caused schools and city services to shut down—but the Ferguson Municipal Public Library stayed open, providing a much-needed safe haven for the community and served as an ad hoc school.

Learning is a 24/7 enterprise for students today, and school libraries continue to become invaluable anchors for education environments. Certified school librarians play an essential part in nurturing 21st-century information literacy skills. From collaborating with classroom teachers to design inquiry-based learning, school librarians are teaching students critical thinking, technology and information literacy skills.



Our nation's academic librarians are working largely with students and academic researchers to help analyze big data. Academic librarians traditionally assess the research needs of academics; however, big data poses new challenges. The sheer quantity and rate of accumulation of data require evolving skills and resources to enable researchers to share, analyze and reuse it.

The lack of diverse books for young readers continues to fuel concern. Over the past 12 months the library community has fostered conversations and fueled a groundswell toward activism to address the lack of diversity reflected in children's literature—both in content and among writers and illustrators.

A current analysis of book challenges recorded by ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) from 2001 – 2013, shows that attempts to remove books by authors of color and books with themes about issues concerning communities of color are disproportionately challenged and banned. A challenge is defined as a formal, written complaint filed with a library or school requesting that a book or other material be restricted or removed because of its content or appropriateness.

In 2014, the OIF received 311 reports regarding attempts to remove or restrict materials from school curricula and library bookshelves. Eighty percent of the 2014 Top Ten List of Frequently Challenged Books reflect diverse authors and cultural content.

The 2014 Top Ten List of Frequently Challenged Books include:

- 1) "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," by Sherman Alexie
Reasons: anti-family, cultural insensitivity, drugs/alcohol/smoking, gambling, offensive language, sex education, sexually explicit, unsuited for age group, violence. Additional reasons: "depictions of bullying"
- 2) "Persepolis," by Marjane Satrapi
Reasons: gambling, offensive language, political viewpoint. Additional reasons: "politically, racially, and socially offensive," "graphic depictions"
- 3) "And Tango Makes Three," Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
Reasons: Anti-family, homosexuality, political viewpoint, religious viewpoint, unsuited for age group. Additional reasons: "promotes the homosexual agenda"
- 4) "The Bluest Eye," by Toni Morrison
Reasons: Sexually explicit, unsuited for age group. Additional reasons: "contains controversial issues"
- 5) "It's Perfectly Normal," by Robie Harris
Reasons: Nudity, sex education, sexually explicit, unsuited to age group. Additional reasons: "alleges it child pornography"
- 6) "Saga," by Brian Vaughan and Fiona Staples
Reasons: Anti-Family, nudity, offensive language, sexually explicit, and unsuited for age group. Additional reasons:
- 7) "The Kite Runner," by Khaled Hosseini
Reasons: Offensive language, unsuited to age group, violence
- 8) "The Perks of Being a Wallflower," by Stephen Chbosky
Reasons: drugs/alcohol/smoking, homosexuality, offensive language, sexually explicit, unsuited for age group. Additional reasons: "date rape and masturbation"
- 9) "A Stolen Life," Jaycee Dugard
Reasons: drugs/alcohol/smoking, offensive language, sexually explicit, and unsuited for age group
- 10) "Drama," by Raina Telgemeier
Reasons: sexually explicit

Other key trends detailed in the 2015 State of America's Libraries Report:

- Digital literacy continues to grow as an important library service. Research shows that families are increasing their access to digital media, but they lack the knowledge to use it effectively in a way that enables learning.
- Makerspaces are trending and provide evidence that libraries are continuing to evolve beyond the traditional focus on collections.
- Many federal government policy and regulatory issues are of importance to libraries and the people who use them. Policies related to personal privacy,

library funding, workforce development, and copyright law are a few of the issues of interest to the library community.

The full text of the 2015 State of America's Libraries report is available at <http://ala.org/americas-libraries>.

The American Library Association (ALA), the voice of America's libraries, is the oldest, largest, and most influential library association in the world. Its approximately 56,000 members are primarily librarians but also trustees, publishers, and other library supporters. The Association represents all types of libraries; its mission is to promote the highest-quality library and information services and public access to information.

[Copyright Statement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Help](#) | [Site Index](#)

© 1996–2015 American Library Association

ALA American Library Association

50 E Huron St., Chicago IL 60611 | 1.800.545.2433