

ALA Statement on the Inclusiveness and Mutual Respect of Library Workers

The American Library Association recognizes the value, importance, and needs of all library workers. The contributions of library support staff, comprising approximately two-thirds of all library workers across the nation, are essential to the provision of quality library services. The purpose of this statement is to strengthen recognition of library support staff within the Association and among library employers.

History

The American Library Association has taken significant steps to understand and address concerns of library support staff in recent years. The ALA:

- co-sponsored the World Book-ALA Goal Award Project on Library Support Staff in 1991
- established the Support Staff Interests Round Table (SSIRT) in 1994, which was renamed the Library Support Staff Interest Round Table (LSSIRT) in 1998
- hosted the 3rd Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Library Support Staff (COPE III), held at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, on May 16-17, 2003
- established support staff member and dues structure in 2004
- featured library support staff in cover story of the March 2005 issue of *American Libraries*
- coordinated the first support staff Conference-within-a-Conference at the 2005 ALA Annual Conference

In addition to these important initiatives focusing on the separate concerns of library support staff, the American Library Association strives to develop an organizational culture of inclusion and mutual respect. An association characterized by open communication and exchange of ideas among all members is essential to achieve full participation and positive morale.

Inclusive Language

Respectful language serves as the foundation of a positive and inclusive organizational culture. Unless greater specificity is necessary, the American Library Association uses inclusive language, such as: all library workers, all library staff, all library personnel, or librarians and support staff. Reference to “librarian(s)” is reserved

for those instances when the true intent of a communication or program is limited to those individuals with an ALA-accredited Master's degree. Library workers should be defined by what they are, have, and offer in the work they perform and the contributions they make, *not* by what they lack (i.e., the ALA-accredited Master's degree).

Library employers are encouraged to consider the terminology and language used in their specific institutions and to discuss inclusiveness and respect within the workplace. *World Book-ALA Goal Award Project on Library Support Staff Issue Paper #8* on "Terminology" provides a good summary of the topic.¹

Learning and Career Development Opportunities

The American Library Association encourages all library workers to become active members in its many divisions, affiliates, and roundtables and to attend meetings, workshops, and conferences of the Association. The ALA is the major national provider of continuing education for library workers, friends, and affiliates. The ALA creates learning opportunities to address the unique needs of library support staff and actively encourages the participation of library support staff in all meetings, workshops, and conferences.

The ALA provides job information, placement, and career services for all library workers. The ALA recognizes that library careers represent several areas of specialty with various levels of entry. Library support staff are integral contributors to and participants in the library profession.²

Organizational Communications and Images

The language of all ALA publications, press releases, public relations material and documents is inclusive of support staff unless the intent of the communication is limited. ALA products and images reflect the diverse careers of library workers whenever possible.

¹ *World Book-ALA Goal Award Project on Library Support Staff Issue Paper #8* on "Terminology," September 17, 1991. Available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/hrdrbucket/3rdcongressonpro/terminologylibrary.htm>

² *Library and Information Studies Education and Human Resources Utilization* policy statement, 2002. Available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/hrdr/educprofdev/educationcontinuous.htm>