Special Populations: *Or, How May I Help You?*

The American Library Association recognizes the critical need for access to library and information resources, services, and technologies by all people, especially those who may experience language or literacy-related barriers; economic distress; cultural or social isolation; physical or attitudinal barriers; racism; discrimination on the basis of appearance, ethnicity, immigrant status, religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression; or barriers to equal education, employment, and housing. ALA and its affiliated organizations have a number of initiatives that support libraries in providing and developing programming that promotes diversity.

Special populations include:
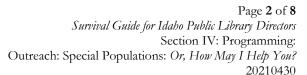
- **Adult New and Non-Readers**

    - **Literacy**: The ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

    - **Basic literacy Skills**: Include reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

    - **Digital Literacy**: The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate.

    - **Financial Literacy**: The ability to use knowledge and skills in the effective management of one's financial resources.

    - **Health Literacy**: The ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

    - **Information Literacy**: The ability to recognize the extent and nature of an information need, then to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information.

    - **Learning Disabilities**: A group of disorders related to the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.

    - **Literacy Programming** may include:

- **Adult Basic Education** (**ABE**): Classes are designed for adults at the elementary level (through grade 8). ABE classes focus on basic literacy and computational skills.

- **Adult Literacy Programs**: Designed to help English-speaking adults improve their reading and writing skills to reach their potential as workers, parents, community members, and lifelong learners.

- **English for Speakers of Other Languages** (**ESOL**): An educational program for non-native English-speaking adults who want to improve their listening, speaking, writing, and computational skills.

- **Family Literacy Programs**: Address the literacy needs of parents and their pre-school children. Many family literacy programs have four distinct components including children's literacy activities from play to print, adult literacy instruction (one-to-one tutoring or small group instruction), family time where parents and children learn and play together, and parenting classes.

- **One-to-One Tutoring**: Trained tutors meet regularly with adult students using curriculum and supporting materials selected to match the learner's skill level and interests.

- **Small Group Instruction**: A trained tutor meets with three to five students on a regular basis. Groups are formed based on skill level and instructional content.

- **Workforce Literacy**: Includes programs and services to help adult literacy learners find employment, move into a new job, or enter trade-based training programs.

- **Bookmobile Communities**

  - **Bookmobiles and direct-delivery outreach services are, and continue to be an integral, vital part of libraries around the country**. For over 100 years, bookmobiles have served rural, urban, suburban, and tribal areas, bringing access to information and lifelong learning resources to all classes and communities. Bookmobiles are a central part of library service.

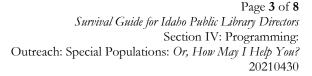 - The American Library Association Has Assembled **Outreach Resources for Services to Bookmobile Communities**:

- **The Association of Bookmobile & Outreach Services** (**ABOS**): https://abos-outreach.com/

  - **ALA ODLOS** *Intersections Blog*: http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/odlos-blog

  - *ABOS Quarterly Newsletter*: https://abos-outreach.com/Newsletter

  - **ODLOS Handbook for Mobile Services Staff**: http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/olos/bookmobiles/Mobile_Services_Handbook.pdf

  - **The Association for Rural & Small Libraries** (**ARSL**): https://www.arsl.org/

- **LGBTQIA+ People**

  - **The Rainbow Round Table** (**RRT**) of the American Library Association (ALA) is committed to serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, genderqueer, queer, intersex, agender, asexual, and ally (LGBTQIA+) professional communities and population at large and is committed to encouraging and supporting the free and necessary access to information, as reflected in the mission and priorities of the American Library Association.

    - The RRT provides its members, other ALA divisions, affiliates, round tables, offices, committees, and the library and information science field as a whole with a forum for discussion and an environment for education and learning about the needs of the LGBTQIA+ professional communities and population at large.

    - To learn more about the resources provided by the RRT, visit http://www.ala.org/rt/rrt.

- **People Who Are Incarcerated, Detained, or Ex-Offenders**

  - Library services for the incarcerated provide opportunities for reading and access to information for adults and juveniles confined to federal, state, and county institutions and to facilities operated by private, for-profit contractors.

    - In 2008, well over 2 million Americans either convicted of a crime or awaiting trial were held in prisons, detention centers, jails,

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juvenile halls, work camps, forensic facilities or hospitals for the criminally insane. An unknown number of non-citizens convicted of crimes or waiting to be deported were confined by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency in county jails or in privately operated detention centers.
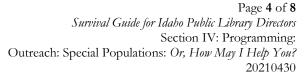
- As ex-offenders return to their home communities, they need library and information services designed to assist in their successful readjustment to society - and to ameliorate the impact of their confinement.

- The American Library Association maintains a collection of resources for Library Services to the Incarcerated and Detained: http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/services-incarcerated.

- **Older Adults**

  - It is important for libraries to explore ways of providing information and education on the subject of aging, facilitating the use of library service by older adults, and continually exploring ways of making library service to this population more effective.

  - The American Library Association maintains a collection of tools, publications, and resources to help libraries plan for services to Older Adults: http://www.ala.org/tools/atoz/older-adults.

  - Keys to Engaging Older Adults is a publication of the American Library Association: http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/Keys%20to%20Engaging%20Older%20Adults-8-19-2019.pdf.

- **People of Color**

  - The term "**person of color**" (plural: **people of color**, **persons of color**; sometimes abbreviated **POC**) is primarily used to describe any person who is not considered "white". In the United States, people of color include African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islander Americans, multiracial Americans, and some Latino Americans, though members of these communities may prefer to view themselves through their cultural identities rather than color-related terminology. The term emphasizes common experiences of systemic racism, which some communities have faced. The term may also be used with other
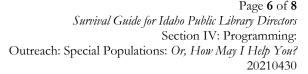
collective categories of people such as "communities of color", "men of color" (MOC), "women of color" (WOC), or "librarians of color". The acronym **BIPOC** refers to black, indigenous, and other people of color and aims to emphasize the historic oppression of black and indigenous people.

- The American Library Association has formed five BIPOC affiliate associations:

  - **The Black Caucus of the American Library Association** (**BCALA**) is an affiliate of the American Library Association that focuses on the needs of African American library professionals by promoting careers in librarianship, funding literacy initiatives, and providing scholarships. For information, visit https://www.bcala.org/.

  - The **American Indian Library Association** (**AILA**) is an affiliate of the American Library Association and is a membership action group that focuses on the library-related needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The organization's members consist of both individuals and institutions that are interested in improving library services to Native American people in any type of library in the United States. To learn more, visit https://ailanet.org/.

  - The **Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association** (**APALA**) is an affiliate of ALA, formed to "address the needs of Asian/Pacific American librarians and those who serve Asian/Pacific American communities." More information on APALA is available at https://www.apalaweb.org/.

  - The **Chinese American Librarians Association** (**CALA** or 華人圖書館員協會**) promotes the Chinese culture through the outlet of libraries and communicates with others in the profession of librarianship. You can learn more about CALA at https://cala-web.org/.

  - **REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking**, more commonly known as **REFORMA**, is an affiliate of the American Library Association, formed in 1971 to promote library services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking. To learn more about REFORMA, visit https://www.reforma.org/.

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- **People Living with Disabilities**

  - The American Library Association recognizes that people living with disabilities are a large and neglected minority, severely underrepresented in the library profession. Disabilities cause many personal challenges. In addition, many people with disabilities face economic inequity, illiteracy, cultural isolation, and discrimination in education, employment, and the broad range of societal activities.

  - 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.

  - ALA, through its divisions, offices and units and through collaborations with outside associations and agencies is dedicated to eradicating inequities and improving attitudes toward and services and opportunities for people with disabilities.

  - On January 16, 2001, ALA Council, the governing body of the American Library Association, unanimously approved the **Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy**: http://www.ala.org/asgcla/resources/libraryservices.

  - Links to provide further information about this policy:

    - Facts: Why an ALA Disability Policy? Why now?: http://www.ala.org/asgcla/asclaissues/factsheetabout

    - History of the Policy: http://www.ala.org/asgcla/asclaissues/historylibrary

    - A Guide to Disability Rights Laws: https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm

    - ADA and Rehabilitation Act Sampler: http://www.ala.org/asgcla/asclaissues/adarehabilitation.

    - The Idaho Commission for Libraries has created a set of resources to help libraries build the capacity for better service to patrons wo are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH); DeafBlind; Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI): https://libraries.idaho.gov/dhh-bvi/.

- **People Experiencing Poverty & People Experiencing Homelessness**
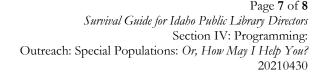
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- **Poverty** is the state of not having enough material possessions or income to meet one's basic needs. Poverty may include social, economic, and political elements. It is important for libraries to find ways to improve library service for families and professionals working with people living in poverty; to foster awareness of these populations and their needs in the library community and among the general public.

    - **The United Nations defines poverty as** the inability to have choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. To learn more, visit https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ydiDavidGordon_poverty.pdf.

    - **"The opposite of poverty is justice."** Bryan Stephenson, Founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative; Professor New York University School of Law: https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice.

    - "Poverty is resolvable, however, making a difference for people who live in the crisis of poverty requires a paradigm shift. A shift that moves us beyond stereotypes and judgement to a deeper understanding of the causes of poverty and its impact on human beings. With this awareness, we can work together to provide genuine opportunities for people to move out of poverty." — **Donna Beegle**, Ed.D.

    - Dr. Beegle inspires and educates individuals, organizations, politicians, and entire communities with proven models to better outcomes for people in poverty. Beegle's organization, **Communication Across Barriers**, Inc. (CAB), is dedicated to broadening and improving opportunities for all people who live in the war zone of poverty. To learn more about CAB-produced

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resources, including books, learning guides, articles, research, organized games and activities, as well as custom-designed curriculum, visit: https://www.combarriers.com/.

- **Spanish-Language Outreach**

    - Library services to Spanish-speaking users can be complex: nationality, regional differences, and culture provide myriad combinations within that community. As an example, there are significant linguistic and cultural differences reflected in the varieties of Spanish spoken by Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Spanish-speaking groups. To recognize and respond correctly to these differences is a major theme within these guidelines. Although the committee is aware of numerous terms for this target population, it has chosen to use the term "Spanish-speaking" in order to encompass the many users that make up this diverse community instead of the outdated and limiting term of "Hispanic".

    - The American Library Association has published **Guidelines for Library Services to Spanish-Speaking Library Users**: http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidespanish

    - **Library Jargon**: https://www.unm.edu/~emmons/nmla/spanish-library-jargon.html

    - Promis, Patricia, and Maria Segura Hoopes. *Habla Español?: No, But I Can Try to Help You: Practical Spanish for the Reference Desk*. Chicago: Reference and Adult Services Association, American Library Association, 2001. Available for purchase at https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/habla-espa%C3%B1ol-no-i-can-try-help-you-practical-spanish-reference-desk.

Programming Librarian is a website maintained by the American Library Association's Public Programs Office. The site's **Calendar of Events & Celebrations** lists events and celebrations to help with your library's program planning.

- Programming Librarian: https://programminglibrarian.org/

- Calendar of Events & Celebrations: https://programminglibrarian.org/node/338

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