United States of America

Responding institution:
American Library Association (ALA)

The USA is a regular contributor to the World Report. It has 9 207 public libraries, 3 653 university research libraries, 93 861 school libraries and 1 193 government research libraries.

Between 81-100% of all of these libraries have Internet access, which is free of charge. Funding for Internet access comes from state and local governments instead of the federal government.

Very much of the Internet content is locally produced and available in local languages. The literacy rate of the USA is given as 95% (99% according to the 2007 *CIA World Factbook*). The ALA is not in favour of filtering information, but filtering software is widespread in the country's libraries.

The respondent has listed a number of issues that are worrying in terms of user privacy and the violation of intellectual freedom; these are elaborated on below.

Libraries in the USA are involved in local HIV/Aids initiatives and they often work with social service agencies. Examples of local library initiatives can be found on the Internet. There are literacy initiatives in the USA, but these are not aimed specifically at women because of a longstanding non-discriminatory approach. Several library initiatives are, however, undertaken in conjunction with state social service agencies to provide education and literacy instruction to special groups of women.

The ALA adopted a code of ethics in 1939 (see http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm). Most of the libraries have adopted this code, along with the ALA Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement. Libraries develop their own policies to implement these codes and statements.

The Internet Manifesto and the Glasgow Declaration have been adopted. (No details have been provided on their implementation.)

User privacy and anti-terror legislation

Sections 215 and 505 of the USA PATRIOT Act affect the intellectual freedom of users because they allow the Federal Bureau of Investigation to access users' library records secretly. There is no need to show suspicion of the individual user or to present facts to a judge to demonstrate probable cause to seize these library records. The government's secrecy makes it difficult to assess the impact on library users, but advocacy groups such as the Bill of Rights Defence Committee (http://bordc.org/) and the Campaign for Reader Privacy are protesting these changes.

The respondent has stated that this kind of legislation has a chilling effect on readers, but that keeping user records allows the library to manage book loans and some Internet access. It is felt that laws that assure the confidentiality of library users' records should protect users sufficiently and encourage library use instead of raising suspicion of government surveillance of their reading habits.

Reported incidents/violations of intellectual freedom in the past two years

In 2006, the ALA's Intellectual Freedom Office recorded 546 challenges to the presence of certain books in public and school libraries, although it is believed that this number is much higher. There are also efforts by states and the federal government to impose restrictions on Internet access. These include laws on mandatory filtering in public and school libraries, regulation of commercial social networking websites, and the criminalisation of some Internet content.

Already there are 21 states that require public and school libraries to develop policies that restrict children's access to materials that are considered harmful to minors, and some states require libraries to install filters. The federal government and one state require Internet filters in school and public libraries that receive government funding.

Public access to certain kinds of information is declining. The closure of libraries of the Environmental Protection Agency, for example, means that public access to information about industrial pollution and contaminated air and water is being limited. More worrying is the federal government's pursuit of policy to use laws and regulations to limit access to public records. More information about these developments is available at
http://www.ala.org/template.cfm?Section=oif&CFID=88451965&CFTOKEN=53988293.

More on the harassment of journalists and bloggers, and on Internet censorship is available at:

- http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20542
- http://opennet.net/research/regions/namerica
- http://opennet.net.search/node/censorship+in+the+usa
- http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/75748

HIV/Aids awareness

Libraries in the USA often work with social service agencies to present awareness programmes on HIV/Aids. Examples of local library initiatives can be found at:

- http://www.detroitpubliclibrary.org/dcal/DCAL_index.htm
- http://www.aidslibrary.org/resources/virtual.html
- http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/explore_topic_detail.jsp?subjectpageid=1219

Women and freedom of access to information

Literacy initiatives are not aimed specifically at women because of a longstanding non-discriminatory approach. There are, however, several library initiatives undertaken in conjunction with state social service agencies to provide education and literacy instruction to special groups of women. These include women in prison, single mothers, homeless women and battered and abused women. More information is available at http://www.buildliteracy.org and at http://www.litwomen.org/directory.html.

IFLA Internet Manifesto

The Internet Manifesto has been adopted. (There are no details on its implementation.)

IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom

The Glasgow Declaration has been adopted. (There are no details on its implementation.)

Ethics

The ALA adopted a code of ethics in 1939 (see http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm).

Most of the libraries have adopted this code, along with the ALA Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement. Libraries develop their own policies to implement these codes and statements. There has been a growing emphasis on their review, as well as staff training on these policies by all kinds of libraries since the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act.

Main indicators

Country name:	United States of America
Population:	301 139 947 (July 2007 est.)
Main language:	English 82.1%, Spanish 10.7%, other Indo-European 3.8%, Asian and Pacific island 2.7%, other 0.7% (2000 census). (Hawaiian is an official language in the state of Hawaii.)
Literacy:	99%
Literacy reported by respondent:	95%

Population figures, language and literacy are from the
CIA World Factbook, 2007 edition
(https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html).

United States of America

Libraries and Internet access

The United States of America contributed to the World Report series in 2005, 2003 and 2001. The following section compares data and answers from 2007 with the 2005 IFLA/FAIFE World Report and adds context from the respondent's estimates, where possible.

Library services

Estimated number of public libraries*:	9 207 (2005: 16 421)
Estimated number of school libraries:	93 861
Estimated number of university libraries:	3 653
Estimated number of government-funded research libraries:	1 193
Source of these numbers:	National Centre for Education Statistics

Internet access

Population online**:	210 575 287 Internet users as of May 2007 (69.7%) (2005: 67.4%)
Percentage of public libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100% (2005: 81-100%)
Percentage of school libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of university libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
Percentage of government-funded research libraries offering Internet access to users:	81-100%
In your estimate, how much local content*** is available on the Internet:	Very much
To what degree is content on the Internet available in local languages:	Very much
Is the library association in favour of filtering information on library Internet terminals:	No (2005: No)
Is the use of filtering software widespread in your country's libraries:	Yes – to protect children; to safeguard national security, religious values and the national ethos/culture; to prevent crime and to safeguard public morality (2005: Yes, to a certain degree in order to protect children)
Is it free of charge for library users to access the Internet on library computers:	Yes, in all libraries (2005: Yes, in all libraries)
Has the state or other library authorities made any extra funding available for Internet access in the library system of your country in the last two years:	Yes, in some cases (2005: No)

* Public library service points, including branch libraries.
** Online population numbers are from Internet World Stats (www.Internetworldstats.com).
*** Local content is defined as content that originates in the country.