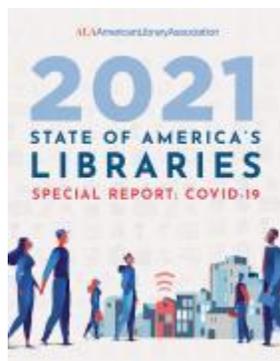


ALA releases State of America's Libraries Special Report: COVID-19



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In April, the American Library Association (ALA) released its State of America's Libraries Special Report: COVID-19, a snapshot of the library communities' resilience, determination, and innovation in unprecedented circumstances. The State of America's Libraries report is released annually during National Library Week, April 4 – 10, and this year's issue focused on the impact of the novel coronavirus on all types of libraries during the previous calendar year.

First sponsored in 1958, National Library Week is observed each April by the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the US. National Library Week celebrations include National Library Workers Day, National Library Outreach Day, and Take Action for Libraries Day, April 8.

Like many public institutions forced to close their doors, libraries worked to adapt to a new way of doing business. Closures did not prevent library workers and libraries from serving their communities. Instead, closed physical space fueled significant innovation and opportunities to assist and support patrons and students.

As most libraries were closed to in-person visits, libraries accelerated or adopted policies that let users access resources from a safe social distance, including offering digital library cards, creating curbside pick-up programs, and promoting ebook lending, which surged 40 percent over 2019.

Libraries played a significant role in bridging a digital divide that became more apparent during the pandemic. Families, marginalized communities, students, and rural residents struggled as the nation pivoted to virtual communication instead of in-person interactions and learning. Multiple studies cited in the report show that a significant sector of the US population lacks access to computers and broadband as well as the digital literacy skills needed to navigate the internet and ethically use communication platforms like Zoom and social media. Many libraries left their wi-fi on even as their buildings closed.

Additional report findings show that attempts to remove library materials continued during the pandemic, despite many libraries and schools closing or moving their activities and services online. The ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) tracks attempts to ban or restrict access to books across the United States and to inform the public about censorship efforts in our libraries and schools.

In 2020, more than 273 books were affected by censorship attempts. Attempts to remove books addressing racism and racial justice or those that shared the stories of Black, Indigenous, or people of color grew in number. At the same time, books addressing themes and issues of concern for LGBTQIA+ people continued to dominate the list.

Below are the top 10 most challenged books of 2020:

1. "George," by Alex Gino
2. "Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You," by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds
3. "All American Boys," by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
4. "Speak," by Laurie Halse Anderson
5. "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," by Sherman Alexie
6. "Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice," by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin
7. "To Kill a Mockingbird," by Harper Lee
8. "Of Mice and Men," by John Steinbeck
9. "The Bluest Eye," by Toni Morrison
10. "The Hate U Give," by Angie Thomas

Other library trends are available in the full text of the State of America's Libraries Special Report: COVID-19, available at <https://bit.ly/soal-report-2021> .

American Library Association (ALA) is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, ALA has been the trusted voice of libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all. For more information, visit ala.org.

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