

**ALA Executive Board
Fall Board Meeting**

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Proposal for ALA Library Disaster Relief Fund

ACTION REQUESTED: Approval

DRAFT MOTION: *The ALA Executive Board approves development of an ALA Library Disaster Relief Fund to channel support from Association members as well as publishers and others serving the library community. The purposes of the Fund will be to raise funds and materials and to channel support to libraries and archives in the wake of natural or man-made disasters.*

ACTION REQUESTED BY: ALA President Jim Neal
Michael Dowling, Director, ALA Office for Chapter Relations and ALA Office for International Relations
Sheila O'Donnell, Director, ALA Development Office

DATE: 18 October 2017

BACKGROUND:

The Chapter Relations Office and the International Relations Office are tasked with coordinating ALA's responses to disasters. This entails contacting the Chapters where disasters hit to assess damage and appropriate response and assistance. For international disasters, it means connecting with the national library association other organizations and institutions (national libraries, etc.).

Domestic 2005-2016

ALA's recent history with disaster relief efforts began with Hurricane Katrina (and Rita) in 2005. As the ALA Chapters most impacted (Louisiana and Mississippi) were not set up to take in donations, ALA took in a little over \$480,000 through 2011. Most of the money collected was distributed to the two state associations; they set up grant applications for impacted libraries. Some funds were provided directly to libraries, such as the New Orleans Public Library Foundation. In addition to fund-raising, a large adopt-a-library program was created to match libraries in the region with libraries outside.

In the continental U.S., this has been the only time that ALA has directly taken in funds for libraries hit by disasters due to the immensity of the geographic region impacted-and the number of libraries. Even

where regions have been hard hit since, such as flooding in the northeast in 2011 and superstorm Sandy 2012, the ALA Chapters, or individual libraries, had the capacity to take in funds. ALA directed those interested in helping to donate directly, not through ALA. ALA did receive a \$35,000 grant from Pitney Bowes to provide grants for ten selected libraries.

The Beyond Words School Library Relief Fund sponsored by Dollar General in collaboration with AASL provides grants after disasters for school libraries that are within 20 miles of a Dollar General Store.

International 2010-2016

ALA's International Disaster Relief efforts in the past 10 years have included Haiti, Chile, Japan, Philippines, Vanuatu, and Nepal. ALA raises funds in the U.S. for libraries impacted and works with the national library association, if possible, or in the case of Vanuatu the funds went to the Australian Library Association's regional effort. In countries such as Haiti or Nepal where there is not a strong national library association, specific libraries or partners are found. For Haiti, \$75,000 was raised and helped rebuild three libraries. The other efforts raised much less: Chile \$2,500, Japan \$5,000, Philippines \$7,000, Nepal \$3,500.

2017 Hurricanes

The major hurricanes of 2017 have created another large disaster zone. The Texas Library Association and the Florida Library Association are both taking in disaster donations for their respective states. To date, TLA has taken in \$130,000 from 1045 individual and corporate donors and will be making grants soon (application process). FLA has raised \$9,300 – perhaps showing the additional challenge presented when you are not the first disaster of the season.

ALA has raised \$8,645 so far for Caribbean Relief, including Puerto Rico.

ALA's Disaster Relief Fund

Until 2016 ALA set up individual disaster relief efforts for each disaster. With the new ALA donation page, there is now one general Disaster Relief Fund where donors contribute. All funds currently taken in are for Caribbean relief. A request box will allow donors to designate funds in the future if multiple campaigns are underway.

The Disaster Relief Fund does show up as a donation option on member renewals and, even before the hurricanes, a number of members did make donations directly to the general donation fund without any designation.

Disaster Preparation and Response

While ALA has long supported libraries recovering from natural or man-made disasters through the dissemination of best practices – such as those developed by the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) – and through support of chapter-based fundraising, the Association has only recently begun active fund-raising on its own for such purposes (Haiti, the Caribbean and Puerto Rico). Because such fund-raising has largely been responsive – beginning after a specific disaster – and relatively short-term, it has been difficult for corporate donors, particularly those who might donate materials (e.g., furniture, collections) to fully participate.

Building on the current Disaster Relief Fund, this proposal would build a long-term fund to gather funds and other donations for libraries recovering from natural or man-made disasters. The intent is that the fund be continuing, not episodic; anticipatory, not reactive; and substantive, implying a recurring campaign. Such a fund would explicitly recognize the critical nature of libraries in communities recovering from disasters. Libraries provide stable safe spaces – and sometimes temporary shelter, expert staff, telecommunications and accurate information. Libraries are anchor institutions in communities facing catastrophic damage, whether from natural disasters, terrorism, pandemics or civil unrest.