

Deaf Culture Forum

Presented by ALA/ASGCLA (Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies) and FOLDA (Friends of Library Deaf Action)

at the ALA Midwinter Meeting

Friday January 24, 2020 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Pennsylvania Convention Center (PCC)

1101 Arch St, Philadelphia PA 19107

Room 103C

Deaf Culture and Libraries: Awareness, Understanding and Action

Part I – Deaf Cultural Definitions

Note: These definitions are not comprehensive, nor are they in any specific order. These definitions serve primarily to ensure that all Deaf Culture Forum participants and speakers are on the same page when discussing ideas.

Library community consists of librarians, library workers, trustees, board advisors, library cardholders and library advocates serving the public, schools, higher education, government, and many other organizations.

The deaf community consists of the deaf -- individuals with various hearing levels, including those who are blind, have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. They may identify themselves as deaf; Deaf; hard of hearing; deafened; or deafblind. Their hearing family members, friends, and neighbors are welcome as members of the deaf community. Many non-profit organizations, national, state, and local, from the deaf community share a similar mission. They want to ensure the deaf from all walks of life achieve their maximum potential through increased independence, productivity, and integration into the community.

Deaf culture has several aspects of shared interest by the deaf such as arts/language/literature; education; organizational; philosophy; political; and/or technology.

Hearing loss refers to individuals who were not born deaf but who later acquired hearing loss, from profound to mild, due to various reasons such as the result of an accident, war, aging, illness or unknown causes.

Children of deaf adults or CODA refers to hearing children of deaf adults. Some deaf people who have deaf parents call themselves deaf CODAs.

Kids of deaf adults or KODA refers to hearing children and teenagers of deaf families. They are increasingly being integrated with deaf children of both deaf and hearing families in library programming and activities.

American Sign Language users; ASL is not a communication tool but rather it is a fully formed language like spoken languages. ASL may be a user's first or second language.

Part II – Deaf Cultural Heritage

ALA and NAD – (American Library Association and National Association of the Deaf) The ALA was founded in 1876, four years before the NAD in 1880. Both have been long recognized as the world's oldest and largest membership nonprofit organizations to focus on the library and the deaf respectively .

In 1976, during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, Molly Raphael of the DC Public Library as the leader along with Alice L. Hagemeyer and other concerned ALA members met to discuss the need of a separate unit for the deaf within the ALA structure. Molly and Alice went before the ALA Executive Board; ALA President Clara Jones appointed a special ad hoc committee of ALA member leaders to investigate how ALA could best support libraries in serving their respective deaf communities. That committee recommended the establishment of a section within ASCLA (Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies; now ASGCLA) in 1978. The ALA President took the initiative to respond to the members' request at that Chicago meeting.

As with the beginning of some organizations, it was a slow beginning. In 1979 the White House Conference on Library and Information Services passed a resolution to create the Deaf Culture Digital Library on both, national and state levels. During the early 2000s, more significant progress was made to better serve the deaf with ALA and NAD working together. In 2004, the delegation at the NAD biennial conference in Kansas City, MO voted the resolution to have the US President proclaim March 13 to April 15 as National Deaf History Month. A year later June 26, 2005 during the ALA annual conference Cynthia Roach, ASCLA Councilor, moved this resolution at the ALA Council, seconded by Ruth Nussbaum, Councilor At Large, and was voted unanimously.

Alice L. Hagemeyer was the 2004-2006 chair of the NAD Ad Hoc Committee on National Deaf History Month. Thomas Harrington, Joan Naturale and Abigail Noland of the ALA ASCLA and Gary E. Wait, archivist and historian from the American School for the Deaf served on the committee. NAD President Andrew J. Lange was the NAD Liaison. The committee created the National Deaf History Month Kit called "Celebrate Deaf Legacy," in which the nation's libraries would be prepared with deaf resources when US President proclaim the month.

FOLDA – (Friends of Libraries for Deaf Action) Founded in 1986 by Alice L. Hagemeyer with volunteers from the DC Public Library, Raymond Baker, Dorothy Casterline, and Bernard Sussman. In 1994, FOLDA obtained a section in NAD called FOLDA-USA. A few years later it changed to the Library Friends. In 2010, the NAD delegation voted to change it to Deaf Culture and History Section. FOLDA is currently a public service of Library for Deaf Action, the deaf cultural programming business. FOLDA has no membership dues but would welcome in-kind contributions from both deaf and library communities. Free subscription to FOLDA E- NEWS and news exchanges can be found at www.foldadeaf.net.

In 2020 and beyond, FOLDA webmaster, Pastor Ron Friedrich, Paige Watson and Alice L. Hagemeyer will discuss upgrading the website to become the "library, museum and archives" on library and information services to the deaf community nationally and globally Experts and representatives from both deaf and library communities would be invited to form the FOLDA advisory group. Among the goals would be to produce quality deaf cultural books for children and young adults.

Organizations like NAD and other appropriate service organizations have already built their own national resource centers to serve their user groups. FOLDA aims to be the first stop for national resources on library and information services; stories of the deaf community and organizations for giving back.

Part III – Deaf Cultural Education: How Deaf History Month Came to Be

In 1972, Deaf awareness to the public finally began through the Colorado Association of the Deaf, when the first Deaf Awareness Week was proclaimed by the Governor of Colorado.

In 1973, Iowa followed Colorado's lead and proclaimed their own Deaf Awareness Week.

In 1974, Ida Mapes and Alice L. Hagemeyer, employees at the DC Public Library, volunteered to teach sign language to other staff. These classes were so successful that students coordinated a deaf cultural event. That same year, the DC Government Office proclaimed the first week of December as Deaf Awareness Week.

In 1997, NAD resolved to rename Deaf Awareness Week to Clerc-Gallaudet Week Dec 3 to 10 and to add a new annual event called Deaf History Month March 13 to April 15. However, it was not an official resolution until later.

In 2005 and 2006, ALA and NAD officially passed resolutions respectively to recognize Deaf History Month.

Part IV – Deaf Cultural Ethnic and Diversity – Programming

Deaf history is the study of past deaf events, particularly in human affairs.

Deaf heritage refers to treasured objects and qualities that have been passed down from previous deaf generations; deaf heritage is a reminder of the past.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Matter.

For programs on equity, diversity, and inclusion, librarians can follow the annual events (day, week or month) as proclaimed by the US President from the White House and/or the United Nations General Assembly for recognition to look for opportunities to celebrate deaf heritage. Libraries in each of the 59 areas eligible for the Institute of Museum and Library Services Grants to States Program can seek opportunities to collaborate on equity, diversity, and inclusion programs. The 59 areas include the 50 states, the District of Columbia, The Territories (Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands); and The Freely Associated States (Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands). (see <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grant-programs/grants-states>)

The following are offered as examples of how deaf and library organizations may form a task force on collaborative library program events to benefit the deaf in local diversity communities of the 59 states.

1. National Association of State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) in partnerships with the National/State Department on Disabilities; State/Regional Library for the Blind and Print Disabilities and State Libraries.(Future DCDL)
2. NAD/Deaf Culture and History Section in partnerships with appropriate NAD national affiliates. E.g. Communication Service for the Deaf; Deaf Inc. and others having multifaceted identities.
3. ALA/ASGCLA Interest Group: Bridging Deaf Culture @ your library in partnerships with appropriate ALA divisions, round tables and units e.g. Public Libraries Division and others having multifaceted identities. <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/>

Over the years FOLDA, in cooperation with the National Literary Society of the Deaf, Inc., and other sponsors, have been developing deaf cultural programs for the DC Public Library, MD public libraries, Arlington County (VA) Public Library, the Library of Congress and others in the nation and other countries. The FOLDA Collection.

A few examples of annual events for celebrating deaf culture are:

February: African American History Month
National Black Deaf Advocates
The Black Caucus of the ALA

March: Women's History Month
Deaf Women United
ALA/ Association of College & Research Libraries, Women & Gender Studies Section

March 13 – April 15: National Deaf History Month (US Congress Presidential Proclamation pending)
NAD Deaf Culture and History Section in partnerships with NAD sections (senior citizens, deaf-blind, education, interpreters, youth, LGBT)
ALA/ASGCLA Bridging Deaf Culture Interest Group

May: Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
National Asian Deaf Congress
Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association

September 15 – October 15: National Hispanic Heritage Month
Council de Manos
REFORMA, The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking

September 23: International Day of Sign Languages
NAD, an organizational member of the World Federation of the Deaf

November: National American Indian Heritage Month
Sacred Circle
American Indian Library Association

December 10: International Day of Human Rights
NAD, an organizational member of the World Federation of the Deaf,

Part V – Deaf Culture and American History – Chronology

The following list is incomplete. Every event listed, and those not listed, has their own story. Additional “first” events and stories of those events will appear on the FOLDA website in 2020 with a more detailed and current chronology of events.

Year	Event
1817	First state school for the deaf opened in Hartford, CT on April 15.1864. First higher education charter for the deaf signed by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln on April 8.
1876	American Library Association (ALA) founded in Philadelphia on October 6.
1880	National Association of the Deaf (NAD) founded in Cincinnati on August 25.
1931	The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled was established by an act of Congress. It is part of the Library of Congress’ 56 regional and 93 subregional libraries.
1965	Sign language is found to be a legit language by Dr. William C. Stokoe. Dr. Stokoe, Dorothy Casterline, and Carl Croneberg coauthored the book Dictionary of American Sign Language on linguistic principles.
1979	A resolution for the Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) was voted upon and passed by 800+ delegates from all over the nation at the White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS) from November 15 to 19.
1986	Friends of Libraries for Deaf Action (FOLDA) founded to promote library access and quality deaf cultural resources for the deaf community internationally.
1988	First deaf cultural civil rights victory: Deaf President Now (DPN). The protests ended on March 13.
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law by President George H. W. Bush on July 26.
2014	First ever DCDL bill, HB 653, signed into state law by the Governor Martin O’Malley of Maryland on May 15.
2017	First ever Deaf History Month bill signed into state law by Governor John Kasich of Ohio on December 6 through SB 027.
2019	Joyce Beatty, the congresswoman from the 3rd District of Ohio serving in the U.S. House of Representatives recognized March 13 to April 15 as National Deaf History Month.

With Thanks:

This document was created through the combined efforts of Alice L. Hagemeyer and Paige Watson. Alice is an honorary member of the ALA. For highlights of her career, see <https://www.gallaudet.edu/about/history-and-traditions/alice-hagemeyer>

Paige Watson is a MLIS student at the University of Maryland. Paige grew up loving libraries and archives, yet many of her peers in the deaf community felt alienated by libraries. She wanted to change this view of libraries but was not sure how. Upon meeting and working with Alice, Paige has found someone who shares her vision for the future. Alice is passionate about promoting literacy, knowledge, and the achievements of deaf people. Paige admires Alice's many accomplishments like creating the Red Notebook, founding FOLDA, and her work in pushing for recognition of National Deaf History Month. Although Paige's interest lies in archives more than in libraries, through Alice, Paige has been inspired to continue Alice's work as she moves forward in her career, wherever she goes.