

## **Canadian Library Association / Association canadienne des bibliothèques Position Statement on the Deliberate Destruction of Libraries**

*Approved by Executive Council ~ September 16, 2007*

**Recalling** CLA's commitment to ensuring free universal access to information and the important role of libraries in open and democratic society;

**Reaffirming** CLA's position that effective advocacy is based upon understanding the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which libraries and information services function; and

**Mindful** of the nation's bill of rights and Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

The Canadian Library Association strongly opposes the deliberate destruction of libraries, their collections and property, and the loss of access to education, culture and information resultant of such destruction caused with hostile intention by individual or groups.

In addition, the Association, in applying this Resolution, recognizes the need to respect international rules related to the criminalization of uncivilized violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular, when intentional destruction of cultural heritage is linked to those violations.

### **Background:**

The firebombing of the United Talmud Torah grade school library in Montreal, Quebec on April 5, 2004 brought our close attention to the issue of intentional destruction of libraries here in Canada. With the more recent news of the temporary closing of the Library and Archives of Iraq in December 2006 and even more recent occupation of its building for military purposes, we were reminded of the true precarious status of libraries on the global stage. It is important for CLA to adopt a statement on the intentional destruction of libraries. A precedent resolution exists in ALA dating back to 1971<sup>i</sup>. As well, in 2003, UNESCO adopted its related international Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage.

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<sup>i</sup> Destruction of Libraries. The American Library Association deplors the destruction of libraries, library collections and property, and the disruption of the educational process by that act, whether it be done by individuals or groups of individuals and whether it be in the name of honest dissent, the desire to control or limit thought or ideas, or for any other purpose. Adopted January 1971, by the ALA Council; at the 1993 Midwinter Meeting, Council voted to reinsert the policy into the ALA Policy Manual (Policy Monitoring Committee Report to Council, January 1993).