50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2795
USA

Telephone 312 944 6780
Fax 312 280 5014
Toll Free 800 545 2433
E-mail: ala@ala.org
http://www.ala.org

Maureen Sullivan
ALA President-elect

3696 Thomas Point Road
Annapolis, MD 21403
Telephone: 410 268 3539
Email: msullivan@ala.org

ALA American Library Association

September 18, 2012

Governor Nathan Deal
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

As President of the American Library Association, with more than 60,000 members across the country (including over 1,500 public, school, and academic librarians, archivists and trustees in Georgia), I write to express our deep concern and dismay about the recent announcement by Secretary of State Brian Kemp that the Georgia Archives will be closed to the public (except for very limited appointments) on November 1.

The Georgia Archives is a treasure trove of unique documents and official records. As one of the original 13 colonies, Georgia has a rich and colorful history. Events of historic importance continue to occur. The State of Georgia established the Archives to preserve the history of Georgia, and access to that resource is vitally important to the future of Georgia and its citizens.

Although some of the materials at the Georgia Archives have been digitized, the vast majority are still only accessible through a personal visit. Closing the Archives to the public is counter to the tenets of open government and to the principle of open access to information that undergirds our democracy. This is why no other state has closed access to its state archives to the public.

All Georgians will be affected directly or indirectly by the closure of the Georgia Archives. Faculty and students from all institutions in the University System of Georgia and private colleges and universities will lose ready access to primary sources for undergraduate and graduate research. Children in kindergarten through high school will lose the opportunity to visit a place where history comes to life via original manuscripts, documents, and maps.

One of the largest groups affected will be genealogical researchers who use the Archives to trace their Georgia roots. Authors trying to piece together the history of certain Georgia events, people, and places will lose one of their most important resources. Fewer books, journal articles, and documentaries about the history and cultural heritage of Georgia will be produced.

I urge you to reverse this decision and to find a way to help the Georgia Archives remain open to the public. Its impending closure will be a major impediment to historical research and will affect not only future generations of Georgia residents but also anyone outside of Georgia who will study Georgia history and culture.

Sincerely,

Maureen Sullivan
President
American Library Association

Cc: Brian Kemp, Secretary of State