



## Memorandum

**To:** NJLA Board of Directors and Members  
**From:** Eileen M. Palmer, ALA Chapter Councilor  
**Date:** 2/16/2021  
**Re:** Monthly Report

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Palmer', is written over the 'From:' line of the memorandum.

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### ALA Midwinter

This report is confined to the actions taken at the ALA Midwinter meeting held virtually January 22, 2021 – January 26, 2021.

Council met January 24<sup>th</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup>. Council forums (where matters are discussed informally) met the 22<sup>nd</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup>. I attended all meetings. All Council documents are available online at: <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/annual-and-midwinter-2021>

Council heard a variety of reports from the Executive Director, Association Leadership and Committees including:

Forward Together Final Report, ALA CD#35 – approved (The report is available at the link above. A summary of recommendations is appended to this report.)

Forward Together Fiscal Analysis Working Group Update, ALA CD#37 – I have been appointed to this group which is charged with recommending resolutions for Council consideration – the next step in this process. The Working Group's first meeting is February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

ALA 5-Year Pivot Strategy, ALA CD#36

This is a really interesting document that I encourage anyone interested in association management to review. The direct link is:

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2036%20ALA%205-Year%20Pivot%20Strategy%20Update.pdf>

ALA Financial Update – ALA's financial situation remains hampered by the inability to get up to date financial data but does seem to be moving towards resolution and is stable at present.

Freedom to Read Foundation (FTRF) ALA CD#22

Committee on Organization, ALA CD#27\_action item – actions approved

Committee on Legislation, ALA CD#20-20.2\_action item – actions approved

Intellectual Freedom Committee ALA CD#19.1-19.3

Council took action on the following resolutions. Since changes tend to be made during the debate process the resolutions as listed at the link above may not be the most up to date working of the resolution as it was voted on. In a few weeks all final actions will appear here:

[http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/council\\_actions](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/council_actions)

Council debated the following resolutions (you can assume I voted yes unless otherwise noted):

Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work, ALA CD#43 – passed

Resolution on replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal aliens" with "Undocumented immigrants", ALA CD#44 – passed

Resolution to Classify Library Workers as 1b Workers to be Listed as a Priority Workforce in Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine #45 – passed (I voted no because the resolution was revised to remove the part about classifying library workers as 1b)

Resolution in Support of Broadband as a Human Right CD 20.1 – passed

Resolution in Opposition to Facial Recognition Software in Libraries CD 19.2 – passed

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Resolution on the Misuse of Behavioral Data Surveillance in Libraries CD 19.3 –  
passed

Once the final wording of the resolutions is made available I will forward to the appropriate NJLA sections/committees for their information and any action they would recommend NJLA take. I believe there are a number of these resolutions that NJLA should consider endorsing or at least discussing with the membership through our sections and committees

Respectfully Submitted

Eileen M. Palmer, NJLA Chapter Councilor

- Survey comment: "Thank you for such a thoughtful, respectful and inclusive process. You have achieved our goal of working "TOGETHER," now it is time for us to move "FORWARD."
- There seemed to be generalized agreement that it is necessary to "rethink, refresh and revise" ALA governance and member engagement.
- A clearer understanding of what Assemblies are is needed before decisions can be made - and what they will be doing, how to get involved, etc.

## Challenges

Through this process, FTWG members noted several challenges.

### Overall challenges

- ALA is complicated and trying to be "everything to everyone."
- Some Councilors are unaware of ALA's overall structure.
- Throughout, the FTWG was challenged in centering conversation around what is best for members and what is most important to them. This process must continue to be about what is best for the Association and its members, not about what is best for Council as a body and its current Councilors.
- There is likely a disconnect between perceptions of members engaged in governance and the general membership. One survey comment that hints at this: "I feel like council members aren't really aware that big changes HAVE to be made."
- Questions the FTWG continues to ponder as our work concludes: How much effort and expense should be in governance and policy versus the services ALA provides for its members? And how much review of policies and governance is the right amount?

### Challenges to the Forward Together Working Group's process

- The charge and expectations for the FTWG shifted during the process. This could be related to one ALA leadership team appointing the group prior to Annual 2020. During Annual 2020, Council's action to "take ownership" of the Forward Together process, combined with a change in ALA leadership, led to some communication issues. We hope that our process, records, and commitment to transparency will allow the work to continue with the Forward Together Resolutions Working Group.
- At the beginning of the FTWG information sessions in August, it was clear that the process and timeline were unclear to Council. The FTWG worked hard to set ground rules for communication, sought clarification from the Executive Board and ALA staff, and worked to listen to Council's thoughts on the Forward Together recommendations.

## Possible Action Steps

### **Core Values**

- Create a Core Values committee whether the Committee piece of Forward Together is adopted or not. This could meet a desire/need identified in this stage of Forward Together and also provide a space for members to regularly review and engage with the core values, another desire heard in this stage of Forward Together.
- Consider more thorough and periodic reviews of governing documents to alleviate the need for sweeping changes like the Forward Together process suggests. This may lead to a need for more members on committee(s) reviewing these documents.

### **Executive Board**

- Consider ways the Board could be an area for increased member representation.
- The FTWG encourages Council and future Forward Together groups to consider experiences from other parts of ALA as Board membership composition debate moves forward. For example, AASL recently moved away from regional representation on its Board.
- There is support to move forward with expanding the board positions directly elected by the membership.

### **Committees**

- Many Councilors are “unclear” of the roles/responsibilities outlined in the proposed six standing committees, which led to a call for “mapping” to ensure nothing is forgotten. Mapping current committees to proposed committees could be a worthwhile next step.
- Consider term limits and clearly state if limits are per committee or one committee per lifetime. Look at survey data for options to consider.

### **Round Tables**

- If the matrix of factors approach for round table evaluation that emerged in Session 4 advances, Council should ask a group of round table members for assistance in developing the matrix.
- The FTWG believes the Round Table Coordinating Assembly Task Force work on a Round Table Governing Document Template is an example of a member-led initiative sparked by SCOE’s Forward Together recommendations. The FTWG feels that Council should think about how member-led initiatives are supported in ALA’s current structure since member-led action was a key piece of why SCOE was formed to begin the governance review process.

### **Council**

- ALA should consider setting minimum participation thresholds for Councilors if engagement from Councilors is important. Numerous emails to two different lists only produced around 60% participation by current Councilors in this stage of the process. Participation could be recorded and displayed publicly. Higher levels of

Council participation will be **absolutely critical** for any next stages of governance changes, especially in the communication of any changes to the membership.

- Possible resolution topics for the next working group to explore:
  - Update the frequency of Council meetings / more virtual meetings
  - Schedule in-depth reviews of ALA policies and governance structure every 5 years
  - Term limits for those on Council
  - Reduce the number of at-large Councilors / reduce the size of Council by 25%
  - Define the responsibilities of Council
  - Identify what is in and out of the scope of Council and can and cannot be transferred to other ALA entities
  - Eliminate the requirement to attend in-person meetings

#### **Other Areas of ALA**

- ALA-APA is an area that needs to be addressed. The FTWG recognizes that SCOE determined this topic to be outside of its purview, but the FTWG also recognizes this group as a critical area for future action.
  - Other ALA entities not mentioned in the SCOE report (and, subsequently, this report) are divisions. Additional working groups are currently working on the Operating Agreement and additional further study will be necessary before any changes could be proposed.
- Focus on clear paths for member engagement across ALA, not only in governance. *Governance is only one path to engagement in ALA.*

#### **Conclusion**

It has been an honor for the members of the Forward Together Working Group to serve our professional association in this critical and overdue task of reimagining the future of ALA. We appreciate Council allowing a group that included Councilors and non-Councilors an opportunity to work for the ALA governing body. We wish the Resolutions Working Group much success and hope that we have provided a solid foundation on which they can build. We committed to transparency throughout our process and encourage you to reach out with questions.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Forward Together Working Group, 2020-2021

Appendix: FTWG Survey Results Summary (November-December 2020) begins on the next page. Page numbers start over at 1.