

ALA 2020 Midwinter Meeting and Virtual Council Meetings – Michigan Chapter Councilor’s Report

Below is a brief report of Council activities and other information from the 2020 American Library Association Midwinter Meeting and Virtual Council Meetings. All Council documents, committee reports, and resolutions from conference may be found online at:

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/documents>

ALA Strategic Directions

The four strategic directions of ALA are:

- **Advocacy**
- **Information Policy**
- **Professional & Leadership Development**
- **Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion**

More information may be found online at: <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/>

Congratulations to Michigan Librarians

President Wanda K. Brown introduced the first [Lois Ann Gregory-Wood Fellowship](#) recipient, Tashia Munson, at the Midwinter Meeting. Munson is a reference and outreach librarian at Washtenaw Community College and an access services and outreach librarian at the University of Michigan.

ALA Councilors Larry Neal, Library Director of the Clinton-Macomb Public Library, and Alexandra Rivera, Student Success and Community Engagement Librarian at the University of Michigan, [were elected by the ALA Council to serve on the ALA Executive Board](#) at the Midwinter Meeting. Neal and Rivera began their three-year terms in July 2020 and will conclude their service in June 2023.

New ALA Executive Director

President Brown introduced [Tracie D. Hall, new ALA Executive Director](#), effective February 24, 2020, at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting. Hall, a Spectrum Scholar, is ALA’s first African American female executive director. Hall’s educational and professional background includes experience in libraries, philanthropic organizations, and higher education.

Hall kicked off the the inaugural ALA Virtual Event in June 2020 with a clear call to action for the library community. [In her statement](#), she advocated for three broad areas of focus, guided by the overarching principle of justice:

- universal broadband
- rapid diversification of the library and information services field
- a commitment from local and federal governments and public and private funders to broaden the philanthropic infrastructure of libraries

[Hall’s recorded statement is available online.](#)

ALA President's Report

President Brown shared details on her first six months in office at the Midwinter Meeting. To date, her work had included working with the Executive Board and ALA staff in wrapping up the executive director search, finalizing the sale of the ALA building in Chicago, supporting the appointment of Crosby Kemper as the next Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Director, campaigning for the federal fiscal year 2020 budget—including the largest increase for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program in twelve years, and beginning the transition of the Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) to Forward Together. Brown commended SCOE Chair Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada and her team for their efforts to date and encouraged councilors to remain engaged as work continued.

At the Virtual event, Brown reflected on lessons learned during the pandemic, including the enduring reality of the digital divide and the value of partnerships. Brown encouraged Councilors to keep the partnerships we had built during the pandemic alive. As she continued to reflect, centering on the protests arising from violence against Black people, Brown challenged Councilors to work to strengthen our libraries' public statements of unity and support for Black people to ensure they truly came to life.

Both the [Midwinter](#) and [Virtual](#) President's Reports may be read online.

At the close of the Virtual Council meetings, Brown passed the gavel to incoming President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr.

Council Resolutions

In addition to a number of tribute and memorial resolutions, Council adopted several resolutions at the Midwinter and Virtual meetings.

Midwinter Meeting

- Ensuring Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Peacefully Assemble at ALA Conferences and Meetings
- Opposition to Charging Prisoners to Read

Virtual Council Meeting

- RESOLUTION on Protecting Privacy and Safety in Coronavirus-related Library Policy
- RESOLUTION Condemning Police Violence Against Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Protestors and Journalists
- RESOLUTION on Developing Library Security Policies in keeping with ALA Policy

ALA Task Force to Explore Online Deliberation and Voting

In a particularly prescient move, Council discussed the need to consider an option for online deliberation and voting in its 2019 sessions, citing the need for greater flexibility and inclusivity. Councilors voted to form a Task Force to explore this issue. Upon forming, the members of the Task Force surveyed Councilors. The survey indicated that overall, Councilors were comfortable with and motivated to

engage in online voting. Although no one technology solution was completely satisfactory for all of Council's needs, solutions will continue to develop. The Task Force's work will continue as part of Forward Together. The Task Force's full [report](#) may be read online.

ALA Finances

Considerable time was spent at both the Midwinter and Virtual Meetings in discussions of ALA's finances. Treasurer Maggie Farrell presented the Treasurer's Report at both meetings – these reports and other financial documents and reports may be found at the [ALA Council Documents site](#).

Councilors and others at the Midwinter Meeting learned that funds believed to be held in reserve for divisions had actually been spent and were not available to the divisions that had been building a strategy around these saved funds. ALA Executive Director Mary Ghikas explained at the Midwinter Meeting that the funds did still exist for each division, but ALA had one checking account. When ALA was short on cash, it used the funds available to ensure that it could meet all financial obligations. Although ALA had pledged to make good on these funds to divisions, in effect, these reserve funds were not available to divisions for the foreseeable future.

Councilors asked for more information to assist them in understanding the fuller financial picture of ALA. Requests included various forms of accounting, going back as far as five years. President Brown, speaking on behalf of the entire ALA Executive Board, admitted to missteps and pledged to accountability and transparency to repair trust and build effective communications between the Board, Executive Director, Council, committees, divisions, and round tables. Brown asked Councilors to submit questions for the Executive Board to review and provide answers.

Ghikas answered the overriding questions: How did we get here? As has been clear from previous Treasurer's Reports, revenue has been declining over the past decade, and administration has been clear about this. ALA's primary revenue streams include publishing, conferences, and memberships. Although FY19 held no individual catastrophes, and Ghikas admitted that bad budgeting played some role, in essence, the collective losses administration has been watching added up. Publishing did not meet projections, and interest income was lower than projected. The Seattle Midwinter Meeting was much more expensive than expected, particularly AV costs, and it became clear in early Fall that ALA had a substantial overspend in its capital budget, particularly in IT.

Council continued to discuss finances at the Virtual Meetings. Additional meetings will be schedule for late summer/early fall to ensure that all of Councilors' questions are answered.

Forward Together

The Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) has wrapped up its work and has transitioned to phase two. This new phase, called [Forward Together](#), pulls all of the recommendations created in the SCOE process together in one document. As noted in previous reports, SCOE was formed to review and study ALA's governance, member participation, and legal structures and systems and provide advice and support to the Executive Board to make priority improvements. SCOE presented preliminary recommendations at the 2019 Annual Conference. These preliminary recommendations are intended to achieve the following goals:

- Enable consistent, strategic, and effective member engagement
- Enable organization-wide planning focused on a common mission and vision for library workers, library supporters, and libraries
- Be financially sustainable
- Enable sustainable, long-term change (including evaluation of progress and more frequent future adjustments)
- Allow stakeholders to have confidence in decisions made when they are not in the room
- Deliver high value products, services, and impact for members

At the final Virtual Council session in June, Council voted to take ownership of the Forward Together process. This involved considerable discussion. Forward Together is still the subject of much dissension among Councilors due to its current recommendation to dissolve Council in favor of an expanded Executive Board and new leadership assemblies. Of particular concern to Chapters and Chapter Councilors—in the proposed structure, Chapters would not have a designated voice in governance. At this time, only one Chapter has voted to support Forward Together. Two chapters have written to publicly express disagreement with Forward Together. Many other chapters have indicated that they need to learn more and are withholding action at this time. MLA has not taken action at this time.

Council will meet in late summer/early fall to continue to discuss Forward Together in preparation for its first vote on Forward Together at the 2021 Midwinter Meeting. Prior to the Council vote at the Virtual meeting, President-elect Jefferson indicated that Council was not tacitly accepting all of the recommendations as they were currently written in the document by voting to accept the process of moving ahead with Forward Together, and that a vote to move forward with the process was necessary to take the next steps.

ALA Council Forum Working Group

The Working Group has completed its work, with Council Forum recommended to become an official subcommittee of the ALA Council Orientation Committee. The Working Group's full [recommendations](#) may be read online. The Orientation Committee and those involved in Forum are taking an active role in Councilor education and ensuring the expectations and processes are clear.

New Division – Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures

Efforts to combine the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS), Library Information Technology Association (LITA), and the Library Leadership & Management Association (LLAMA) into a single new division named Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures, continued throughout the spring, culminating in a vote by the membership of the three divisions to dissolve the existing divisions and form the new divisions. Council resolved the outcome of the membership vote at the Virtual Council meeting, confirming the votes to dissolve each division and confirm the new division. Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures became effective September 1, 2020.

ASGCLA Dissolved

Council voted to dissolve the Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASGCLA) at the Virtual Council Meeting. Although this outcome was not necessarily the will of the membership, and many members were concerned that members were not consulted nor given the

opportunity to vote, the division no longer had the funding to continue and its efforts to make itself sustainable had failed. Council also voted to allocate ASGCLA components to respective ALA units.

Report submitted by:

Submitted by Jennifer L. Dean, MLA President and ALA Chapter Councilor

Overview of Chapter Councilor Events at ALA – when meetings are held in person

Below is a breakdown of mandatory (M) and recommended (R) meetings for Chapter Councilors:

Chapter Leaders Forum (R) – This day-long Friday pre-conference provides an opportunity for chapter presidents and councilors, state association executives, and other chapter leaders to meet, present, discuss, and learn about what chapters are doing, what issues chapters are facing, and how the chapters can work together and with ALA.

Chapter Relations Committee (CRC) I and II (R) – This ALA committee is charged “To develop and recognize chapters as integral components of ALA.” Chapter Councilors are encouraged to attend these two meetings at each conference. Information online at:

<http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-crc>

Chapter Councilor's Forum (R) – Always held between the two CRC meetings, the forum is an opportunity for chapter attendees to discuss chapter related topics, updates, and concerns. Chapter Councilors should make this a priority to attend.

Council Forums I, II, and III (R) – Held prior to each Council meeting, the Council Forum events are for all interested individuals to discuss and work on resolutions and other agenda items or possible Council interest topics that will or may be covered on forthcoming Council meeting agendas at the conference. These meetings are open to anyone and they are recommended but not required for Chapter Councilors.

Council Meetings I, II, and III (M) – Council meetings are the official venue for ALA business. Council meetings are held in the mornings at the main conference center venue. All materials for meetings are posted on the Council Documents page and Councilors should read them prior to each Council meeting at the conference, checking regularly throughout the conference for updates. Councilors keep a paper record of each vote they take at Council sessions. Chapter Councilors may consult with their chapter board, staff, and members prior to each Council session when time permits, but due to the fluid nature of Council, Chapter Councilors must vote in accordance with their own conscience and knowledge.

Council Orientation Session for New and Re-elected Councilors (R) – Any Councilor may attend this session. It is particularly recommended for new councilors for an orientation to Council basics, including parliamentary procedure, understanding financial reports, and drafting resolutions.

Council/Executive Board/Membership/Information Session (R) – Held prior to the ALA Membership Meeting, this session offers a report to the membership of ALA Executive Board, staff, and Council activity in between in-person meetings.

ALA Membership Meeting (R) – The official member meeting is part of every conference. Councilors should attend this meeting. Any ALA member may present a resolution for members to vote on. Resolutions affirmed by member vote will be forwarded to Council for further discussion and action.

In addition to meetings, there are numerous programs and events that may be of interest.

It is the responsibility of the Chapter Councilor to report to the chapter after attending conference.