TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability: Implementation Team Interim Report

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

● Review of the Interim Report and Recommendations Implementation Dashboard
● Review the “We recommend” statements to help guide the identified work to more fully carry out the vision the organization has for this work.
● Agree to encourage and/or assist the new executive director to complete the actions listed in the attached briefing for the new Executive Director. These recommendations are from the Final Report of the Task Force and will need the executive director’s leadership as they begin their tenure.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
Rebekkah Smith Aldrich & Rene Tanner, co-chairs of the ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability

CONTACT PERSON:
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DRAFT OF MOTION:

DATE: January 15, 2020

BACKGROUND:
In 2018 the Executive Board accepted the Final Report of the ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability [https://bit.ly/2SUksW8] which contained 52 recommendations for how the Association may provide leadership and serve as a model for sustainable practices more broadly in the profession; how the association may provide leadership in the adoption of sustainability practices in libraries; and how libraries may provide leadership and serve as a model for sustainability in the communities they serve.

The task force was asked to also serve as an implementation team to help find a path forward to carry out the recommendations

ATTACHMENTS:

● Implementation Team Interim Report (includes a link to an Implementation Dashboard)
● ALA Executive Director Briefing (Appendix A)
Interim Report of the ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability/Implementation Team

As noted in the Final Report of the Task Force in 2018 “sustainability” is not an end point but a mindset, a lens through which operational and outreach decisions should be made. This is an extremely tall order that calls upon all stakeholders – ALA staff, ALA Executive Board and Council, and ALA members – to take responsibility for the recommendations. Coordination of this effort is no small feat and we have provided recommendations below to ensure the energy behind the good work begun maintains its momentum.

As you may recall, the recommendations in the report were organized to build on one another – from building blocks to capstone events - to give our association the best possible chance to lead transformational change for itself, our profession and for the communities served by our membership. While there is much work to be done, we are pleased to report the association is off to an excellent start thanks to the help of many stakeholders.

Highlights To-Date

1) The accomplishment of two of the largest “building blocks” recommended:
   - Recommendation 1.1: Adopt sustainability as a core value of the profession; tie the existing Core Values of Librarianship to the Resolution of the Importance of Sustainable Libraries.
   - Recommendation 2.14: Mandate the inclusion of related topics in LIS curriculum (e.g., Sustainability/Triple Bottom Line/Collective Impact/Resiliency)
     - We recommend that the Executive Board advise the Implementation Team as to how best to raise awareness about this through an outreach effort to LIS program to alert them of this new emphasis.

2) Embedding a “sustainable thinking” mindset into our association and the profession continues to be a known challenge. However, strategic action is being taken in this area that we hope will serve the profession and the association for years to come:

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2 As defined in the Final Report, “sustainable thinking” aligns a library’s core values and resources with the local and global community’s right to endure, to bounce back from disruption and to thrive by bringing new and energetic life to the community through choices made in all areas of operations and outreach.
a. A major leader in this effort will be the new ALA Executive Director. Sustainability was a topic of conversation during the interviews for the new Executive Director. A written briefing on the work of the task force has been created for addition to the portfolio on sustainability the new Executive Director will receive during their onboarding phase and provided to Mary Ghikas. It is also appended to this report. This briefing isolates the top ten recommended action items that likely need the new Executive Director’s early attention.

b. Helping library leaders themselves become educated and activated on this issue is no small feat. To this end, Recommendation 2.1 calls for a partnership between ALA and the New York Library Association (NYLA) to bring the Sustainable Library Certification Program [http://SustainableLibrariesInitiative.org] to a national audience. A proposal to define what a partnership between ALA and NYLA on this program has been provided to Mary Ghikas for your consideration and will be provided to you at this conference.

3) Registration for the ALA Midwinter meeting provided attendees the opportunity to consider a “Sustainability Pledge” to lower the carbon footprint of the conference [https://2020.alamidwinter.org/sustainability] and the topic of sustainability is one of a limited number of “Big Discussion” topics at the Symposium on the Future of Libraries.

a. We recommend that the practice of offering a Sustainability Pledge be formally adopted for future conferences. This pledge can evolve with changing circumstances of society's response to climate change.

b. We recommend that a page be added to the top level navigation of ALA.org that similarly declares ALA’s commitment to and work on the topic of sustainability.

4) As of January 2020 the ALA Endowment Fund is down to just 1.7% in energy investments; 34.1% of the Fund is now invested in Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) designated securities.
a. **We recommend** that work to reduce energy investments and increase ESG investments continue with purpose.

5) Sustainability has been added to the ALA Legislative Agenda for 2020 as an “Emerging Policy Issue.”

**Stewardship Recommendations**

Each highlight listed above is thanks to an individual stakeholder or team of stakeholders who took ownership of an issue and advanced it: task force members\(^3\) took the lead on the resolution to adopt sustainability as a core value; task force member Sara Dallas, who also serves on the Committee on Legislation, advocated strongly to have sustainability considered on the Legislative Agenda; a team from the Social Responsibilities Round Table and the Sustainability Round Table have worked long-term on the issue of socially responsible investing of the Endowment Fund; ALA staff members advanced the Sustainability Pledge as part of Midwinter Registration; members of the search committee for the new Executive Director ensured sustainability was a topic of conversation; and Mary Ghikas has ensured sustainability will be a part of the orientation agenda for the new executive director.

We will need continued coordination and stewardship of the remaining recommendations. To that end the team has:

- Identified which recommendations they feel they can take the lead on given the short-term nature of the task force;
- Reached out to the Sustainability Round Table\(^4\) to discuss which items may be a good fit for them to become the leaders on;
- Identified which items need a staff champion; and

\(^3\) ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability Members:
- Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Mid-Hudson Library System, Co-Chair
- Rene Tanner, Arizona State University, Co-Chair
- Monika Antonelli, Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Matthew Bollerman, Hauppauge Public Library
- Sara Dallas, Southern Adirondack Library System
- Adrian K. Ho, University of Kentucky Libraries
- Traci Engel Lesneski, MSR
- Margaret Woodruff, Charlotte Library

\(^4\) The Sustainability Round Table continues to be the fastest growing round table in the association posting a 17.73% increase in members for 2019.
• Noted our suggestions where the **Executive Board** consider taking the lead to advance recommendations in the report that need vision and determination.

We have captured this work in what we call the “Implementation Dashboard” which we have provided an introduction and link to below.

**Implementation Dashboard**

With 52 recommendations to track and a fairly large cast of characters involved in bringing these recommendations to life, the task force is using a dashboard approach to track progress on the recommendations and to capture our notes and findings related to the recommendations.

**We welcome your review and comments on the dashboard as it stands today** either via email to the team’s co-chairs, during our presentation to you at the Executive Board meeting on Friday of the Midwinter conference or by using “column K” in the dashboard to capture your notes/thoughts.

A brief introduction before you dive into that interface:

• This is a live, working document being used by the task force;
• The dashboard is color coded so that at-a-glance you can see which items have been completed (green); which are in progress (yellow); which are currently under discussion with the Sustainability Round Table (blue); and which items still need champions (red);
• Notes are often rough as this is a working document, if anything needs clarification please do not hesitate to contact us.

Appendix A

ALA Executive Director Briefing: Special Task Force on Sustainability

Date: January 15, 2020
Prepared by: ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability/Implementation Team

Introduction: In 2018 the ALA Executive Board accepted the Final Report of the ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability [https://bit.ly/2SUksW8] which contained 52 recommendations for how the Association may provide leadership and serve as a model for sustainable practices more broadly in the profession; how the association may provide leadership in the adoption of sustainability practices in libraries; and how libraries may provide leadership and serve as a model for sustainability in the communities they serve.

The task force was asked to continue on as an implementation team to help find a path forward to carry out the recommendations. To this end, several major recommendations have been accomplished including the adoption of sustainability as a new core value of the profession, the requirement that sustainability issues be integrated into LIS curriculum, the addition of sustainability as an emerging policy issue to the ALA Legislative agenda, and an emerging partnership with the New York Library Association to offer a Sustainable Library Certification Program nationwide.

There are several recommendations that require accountability and championship at the highest level of our association, appropriate for the executive director to take the lead on and expedite in the face of the urgency surrounding the growing concern around the impact of climate change in our world today.

Actions: We have identified three categories of focus that require the stewardship of the Executive Director. Focusing on these areas and completing the actions noted as associated with these areas in the next two years would demonstrate that the Association understands its role as an organization that is deploying “sustainable thinking” and is leading the way:

1. Orientation and education for ALA staff on the topic of sustainability (1.13)
   - Tie ALA staff job descriptions and performance appraisals to the Resolution on the Importance of Sustainable Libraries (1.15)
   - Connection of ALA staff with items in the report that need a staff champion.
   - Complete the Red Cross Ready Rating Program to understand the Association’s preparedness for natural disasters (1.21) [https://www.readyrating.org/The-Red-Cross-Ready-Rating-Program]
   - Begin using GRI Reporting Standards to communicate the impact of sustainability decisions to the ALA membership and beyond (1.18)

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5 As defined in the Final Report, “sustainable thinking” aligns a library’s core values and resources with the local and global community’s right to endure, to bounce back from disruption and to thrive by bringing new and energetic life to the community through choices made in all areas of operations and outreach.

6 https://bit.ly/30m8sym
- Complete Chicago’s Green Office Space Challenge (1.14) [Note: this specific program may no longer be available; suggest either checking with the City to see if this program or an equivalent is available: http://icleiusa.org/programs/city-business/green-biz/ or using components of the New York Library Association’s Sustainable Library Certification Program to do this work methodically in the organization.]

2. Leverage ALA’s leadership on the topic of sustainability as a membership recruitment tool (1.23)
   - Partner with the New York Library Association (NYLA to nationally offer a Sustainable Library Certification Program) (2.1)
   - This item could include: elevating a page on the ALA.org web site to state the organization’s commitment to this work and provide status updates on achievements and advancements; integrating talking points related to this work in membership recruitment materials, particularly those used with LIS students; and offering conference registration benefits/savings for those that take the sustainability pledge or join the Sustainable Library Certification Program.

3. Raise the profile of ALA as it pertains to sustainability and community resilience issues:
   - ALA Policy Corps: Advocacy, Legislation, and Issues: Key Policy issues should encompass sustainability/community resilience issues (1.5)
   - Seek alliances with other national associations working towards a more resilient future (1.20)
   - National press releases related to the role libraries play in creating sustainable communities and building community resilience (1.24)
   - The Implementation Team has identified a number of potential allies working at the national, and sometimes international, level in this work such as:
     - Project Drawdown [https://www.drawdown.org/]
     - 350.org
     - Transition USA [https://www.transitionus.org/]
     - The Post Carbon Institute [https://www.postcarbon.org/]
     - The Project for Public Spaces [https://www.pps.org/]