Introduction

The Office for Library Advocacy was established in 2007, an outgrowth of the ALA Ahead to 2010 Strategic Plan which designated advocacy as the top concern for our members. Under the direction of Marci Merola and assisted by Jackie Finneke, the Office works effectively to provide advocacy resources, training and support to libraries around the country—no small challenge during these tough economic times.

Funding Crisis Efforts

The ALA Office for Library Advocacy has spearheaded efforts to respond to library closures and other catastrophic library fiscal crises at the state and local level. The goal of ALA’s involvement is to advance the efforts of the library and/or ALA Chapter in question to avert the closing or restore library funding. ALA can only become involved when its efforts are welcome by and coordinated with the library and/or state Chapter in question.

An “ALA Crisis Team,” headed by the Office for Library Advocacy, in close coordination with the Public Information Office, American Libraries, the Governance Office, the Chapter Relations Office, ALTAFF, and the Office for Government Relations. Related Divisions are consulted, as appropriate (e.g. PLA when a public library is involved). State libraries are also to be consulted.

In the case of a statewide crisis, the ALA Crisis Team will initiate contact with the ALA Chapter President, Executive Director and/or designate, in order to determine facts and gather background information. In the case of a local crisis, ALA staff will contact the local library director, trustees, Friends or other body legally responsible for library services within the given community, in order to determine facts and gather background information, in concert with the ALA Chapter.

The Crisis Team continues to monitor situations occurring around the country. Recently, ALA President Camila Alire and AASL President Cassandra Barnes wrote a joint letter opposing cuts of school librarians throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District; both presidents also wrote a joint letter opposing proposed cuts of school librarians throughout the Ann Arbor, Michigan, school district. In some cases, however, state leaders did not feel that ALA involvement would benefit their local efforts. For the most current information, visit American Libraries online at www.americanlibrariesmagazine.org.

Library Snapshot Day

In April, the ALA Advocacy Coordinating Group launched a national initiative to support Library Snapshot Day across the country. This effort marks the first collaboration of the Advocacy Coordinating Group as well as the first association-wide, grassroots, advocacy collaboration designed to assist at the state level. A total of 27 states -- more than half the country! -- committed to participate in this first national Library Snapshot Day, although not all were able to have the event in April in their state. The goal of the initiative is to generate photos, statistics, stories and more about the countless ways that patrons use their local libraries.

Library Snapshot Day was originated by the New Jersey Library Assn. and the New Jersey State Library, to capture library usage across the state during a given day. Other states quickly followed suit, including Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Maine, as well as the DuPage (IL) Library System. Snapshot Days have been successful in garnering participation, numbers, and media attention. Visit www.ala.org/librarysnapshotday to learn more.
Advocacy University

Two new products will launch at the ALA Annual Conference:

Camila Alire’s Frontline Advocacy Online Tutorial: www.ala.org/frontlineadvocacy

A frontline advocacy webinar is planned for early fall. —Flash cards|| with key messages for frontline advocates are being launched at Annual.

Organizing for a Tough Budget Year: www.ala.org/advocacyuniversity

Trainings at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference

Surviving in a Tough Economy: An Advocacy Institute Workshop

Nearly 25 people registered for the Surviving in a Tough Economy: An Advocacy Institute Workshop, which took place on Friday, June 25, 2010, from 9 a.m. - noon. Sessions included topics such as maintaining your budget; Working with Decision-Makers; Tips for a Successful Campaign in a Tough Economy; and Positive Messaging in a Tough Economy.

Speakers included: Carol Brey-Casiano, Chair, ALA Committee on Library Advocacy; Shirley Bruursema, Chair, Kent District (Michigan) Library Board of Trustees; Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director, ALA; Loida Garcia-Febo, Queens Public Library; Judith Gibbons, Chair, ALA Advocacy Training Subcommittee; Patricia Glass-Schuman, Neal-Schuman Publishers; Kathleen Imhoff; Marci Merola, Director, ALA Office for Library Advocacy; Peter Pearson, Executive Director, Friends of the St. Paul (Minnesota) Public Library; and Denise Zielinski, DuPage (Ill.) Library System. The event was co-sponsored by the Delaware Library Association, the District of Columbia Library Association, the Maryland Library Association, and the Virginia Library Association.

That afternoon, over 100 library advocates were treated to a Train-the-Trainer session to assist with ALA President Camila Alire’s initiative, Advocacy on the Front Lines. This initiative will empower all levels of library staff to become better advocates for their libraries and for themselves, which is crucial for libraries to survive this current economy. The Train-the-Trainer program focused on selecting content and technology appropriate to physical settings and all library types, as well as teaching techniques appropriate for the Frontline Advocacy initiative. Speakers included Dr. Camila Alire, 2009-2010 ALA President; Patricia Glass Schuman, Past-President, ALA; President, Neal-Schuman Publishers & Foundation; Dr. Julie Todaro, Co-Chair, 2009-2010 ALA Presidential Initiative; Patricia Smith, Executive Director, Texas Library Assn.; and Marci Merola, Director, ALA Office for Library Advocacy.

“Advocacy Hour” at the ALA Member Pavilion

The Advocacy Coordinating Group of the COLA hosted an "Advocacy Hour" at the ALA Membership Pavilion (#2525) on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, June 26, 27 and 28. Conference attendees were invited to bring their questions and talk to library advocates about key advocacy issues. Each hour will begin with an update on Library Advocacy Day. On Monday, Ron Carlee, Director, Domestic Strategic Initiatives for the International City/County Management Assn., will be discussing how to work with decision-makers.
Library Advocacy Day

The Office for Library Advocacy is collaborating with the Washington Office this year to present Library Advocacy Day. For one year only, Library Advocacy Day will replace National Library Legislative Day (NLLD). On June 29, 2010, over 1,100 library advocates from all 50 states and Washington, D.C. will meet at Upper Senate Park on the U.S. Capitol grounds. The event, which will begin at 11 a.m., will feature guest speakers, photo ops, and a chance to cheer on libraries! After the rally, participants will meet with their elected officials and their staffs.

Ilovelibraries.org

ALA’s advocacy website for the public, Ilovelibraries.org, continues to be published twice monthly, run by a primarily volunteer staff comprised of ALA staff. The website is currently generating 8332 hits daily, with 1,300 subscribers. The Ilovelibraries.org Facebook page has almost 16,000 subscribers.

It has been my great pleasure to serve as the Chair of the new Committee on Library Advocacy for these past 3 years, working with colleagues who are passionate about library advocacy in every community and type of library. I will be stepping down from the Committee and turning the chairmanship over to the extremely capable Pat Tumulty at the end of Annual Conference, but know that I will always be an advocate for libraries—and ALA—everywhere I go.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Brey-Casiano  
Chair, Committee on Library Advocacy

Committee Members: Robert E. Banks, Wanda Brown, Pamela B. Chesky, Peggy J. Danhof, Ann Dutton Ewbank, Donna O. Dziedzic, Charlotte L. Glover, Frances G. Kaufmann, Karen Keys, Debra Kay Logan, Joan Ross Reeves, Patricia A. Wand, Christy D'Antonio (Intern) and Patricia M. Hogan, Executive Board Liaison.

Staff Liaison: Marci Merola, Director OLA