2015 Midwinter Meeting Report to Council
Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA)

Committee Charge:

To support the efforts of advocates for all types of libraries; to develop resources, networks and training materials for advocates at the local, state and national levels with particular emphasis on the grassroots level; to work closely with the Office for Library Advocacy in collaboration with the Public Awareness Committee, the Chapter Relations Committee, the Committee on Legislation, and other ALA offices, divisions, and roundtables as well as external groups to integrate advocacy efforts into the overall planning, priorities and polices of the association; and to cultivate future leadership in order to sustain and enhance the advocacy efforts of the association.

Committee Members:

Chair – Gina Millsap
Members -- Gladys Smiley Bell; Elizabeth Burns, Lauren Comito; Kristine Ferry; Judith Gibbons; Carl Harvey; Dr. Majed J. Khader; Nancy Jo Lambert; Daniel C. Mack; Rhonda K. Puntney Gould; Gary L. Shaffer; Morgan Sohl

Executive Board Liaison -- Alexia Hudson-Ward
Interns -- Mallory Arents, Natarsha Miller

Staff Liaisons -- Marci Merola, Director, Office for Library Advocacy; Joaquin Falcon, Communications Specialist, Office for Library Advocacy

COLA Motion

In order to meet the increasing demand for activities related to state and local advocacy work and projects; and given that advocacy has been designated by the Executive Board and Council as one of the priority action areas for ALA's new strategic plan, the Committee on Library Advocacy officially recommends that additional resources, including operational budget and staffing levels, are provided to the Office for Library Advocacy.

Strategic Plan for Advocacy

The Committee on Library Advocacy and Office for Library Advocacy have been closely involved in the development of the association’s first strategic plan for advocacy. Since the 2014 ALA Annual Conference, OLA has been working closely with senior management to gather input from around the association on a vision for the new strategic plan, including Kitchen Table Conversations at ALA Conferences and Chapter Conferences, Virtual Town Hall Forums, Visioning Sessions at the 2015 ALA Midwinter Meeting and more (including the upcoming 2014 ACRL Conference and other chapter conferences).
In order to ensure that a holistic vision for advocacy is reflected in the strategic plan, COLA and OLA have created and are leading the Advocacy Working Group, an ad-hoc group of committee chairs that will guide development of the Strategic Plan for Advocacy. This group comprises chair of the Committee on Legislation, the Chapter Relations Committee, the Public Awareness Committee and its Campaign for America’s Subcommittee, as well as staff liaisons.

In addition, strategic directions for advocacy have been a focus of meetings of external advocacy partners convened by OLA, PLA and United for Libraries. This working group comprises representatives of OCLC, COSLA, Aspen Institute, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Urban Libraries Council, Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, the Association for Small and Rural Libraries, Urban Librarians Unite, EveryLibrary, University of Washington I School, and others, in order to share information, concerns and priorities.

Marci Merola, OLA Director, will be working with senior management to draft the initial version of the strategic plan in time for the 2015 ALA Executive Board Spring Meeting. Division executive directors will have an opportunity to review the draft prior to the meeting.

School Library Initiatives

Marci Merola and Gina Millsap joined AASL Executive Director Sylvia Norton and AASL President Terri Grief in reporting to the ALA Executive Board. Executive Report #12.18 follows.

Background

The Office for Library Advocacy (OLA) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) report on developments in advocacy for school libraries. Multiple years of strategic advocacy plans have culminated in past months, as OLA and AASL begin to institutionalize much of the strategies and tactics articulated in these plans. A new working framework has emerged, with three distinct audiences: external audiences (including advocates, parents, and decision-makers); the profession at large including librarians of all types, and ALA staff and member groups.

For External Audiences


- **Online Resources for Parents and Advocates:** “School Libraries Make A Difference,” an online resource available at www.i-love-libraries.org, launched in June. The resource answers questions such as Why are school libraries essential?; Are school libraries in danger?; How can I get involved?; and Frequently Asked Questions. It is filled with infographics and videos.

- **Declaration for the Right to School Libraries:** 2013-2014 ALA President Barbara Stripling’s initiative continues through 2014-2015 ALA President Courtney Young’s term. The Declaration for the Right to School Libraries brings the critical role of school libraries into the spotlight.

For the Profession

- AASL launched an internal campaign that will run through the ALA Midwinter Meeting, seizing the opportunity for face-to-face conversations that can be leveraged to spread the school library
advocacy message through AASL and within the greater ALA. “Ask Me How School Libraries Transform Learning” will inform conference goers from all types of libraries about the critical role school libraries play in children’s lives, as well as how they can be advocates for their fellow librarians.

- ALA President Courtney Young echoed this campaign with her recent e-blast to membership asking all types of librarians to speak up for school libraries via letter to the editor and op-eds at the local level.

For ALA Staff and Member Groups
OLA, PIO and AASL continue their work of institutionalizing efforts around school library advocacy within the association. Key initiatives include:

- **Messaging:** enhancement of current school library messaging for media opportunities such as op-eds, and letters to the editor, as well as advocacy opportunities such as crisis messaging and talking points for decision-makers. Includes talking points on college- and career-readiness, Common Core (when needed) and other key points as indicated in AASL’s Standards for 21st Century Learning. Includes a student-focused emphasis.

- **Media Strategizing:** Representatives from all units meet regularly to discuss media focus and planning

- **ESEA:** As ESEA legislation looms, these groups are prepared to work in collaboration with the Washington Office for maximum media exposure and timely, on-message communication to members and library advocates.