

ALA Conference Committee Report: 2015-2016, through Annual 2016

Committee: ALA Conference Committee (standing)
Time Period: 2015-2016—through Annual Conference 2016
Report Submitted By: Clara N. Bohrer, Chair, 2015-2016

Activities of the Committee and the Conference Program Coordinating Team:

This report covers activities of the ALA Conference Committee on ALA Connect and at the 2016 Annual Conference face to face meeting.

- Received an update from staff on the financial results of the 2016 Midwinter meeting.
- Received an update on the registration and budget targets for the 2016 Annual Conference.
- Staff reported there would be no bundle opportunity for next year. Instead if you attend the 2017 Midwinter Meeting you will receive a discount coupon for the Annual Conference. With the coupon, the bottom line cost would be the same had there been a bundle. The Committee recommended to staff to make sure the coupon is held within the system and applied automatically for ease and convenience of members.
- Reviewed the Conference Accessibility Task Force Report to Council. The Chair, who sits on the task force, provided an update on the complaint process review subcommittee. There may be the need for some type of ticketing system which will track a complaint from inception to completed action to provide data moving forward, as well as a definitive accessibility checklist. No data currently exists. There is also the need to inform all units about accessibility issues particularly if they are holding off site events. The Conference Committee awaits final recommendations from the task force.
- The ASCLA representative provided the committee with an accessibility checklist which conference services staff will review. The document has also been provided to the Conference Accessibility Task Force.
- Reviewed the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force recommendations that were being presented to the Executive Board/Council. It was apparent to committee members that some of the tasks assigned to our Committee were not necessarily within our charge. Our committee predominantly deals with policy, not hands-on conference planning which is conducted by ALA conference services staff. There was discussion that perhaps in the future we need to review and potentially revise our charge and committee composition, going through the necessary channels, of course. Our EB liaison, who was attending the meeting planned to bring back the essence of our conversation around our charge and the EDITF recommendations to the Executive Board.
- There was extensive conversation at the Conference Committee meeting and at the Conference Program Coordinating Team meeting around Annual Conference and the need for a re-examination.
 - Member feedback – over multiple post-conference surveys, as well as on-site individual feedback – is consistently negative on the size and complexity of the Annual Conference “campus.” While they like the buses, in general attendees do not like having to repeatedly go between multiple locations – often some distance away.

- Member feedback consistently indicates a need for greater clarity around the content being offered at Annual Conference. There is a substantial amount of content over a broad scope – and finding your way to what would be valuable for you is very difficult, for most attendees, but particularly for new attendees.
- Related issues – ranging from cost to accessibility – also relate to the spread of the “campus.” Solving or moderating some of these issues will require solving the “spread” issue.
- There has been significant growth in the number of smaller, more focused conferences from within/without ALA. That is a competitive challenge for ALA, but ALA has significant advantages (e.g., major exhibit floor, number of authors) and can remain very strong – if the Association addresses campus spread issue and the “content confusion” reported by attendees.
- It was further pointed out that numerous rooms at this conference remain empty when there should be a meeting/interest/discussion group in them. Some meeting rooms have 2 or 3 people.

It was the consensus of the group to have Mary Ghikas put together several models of what Annual Conference could look like to address current issues on ALA Connect prior to our next face to face meeting at Midwinter. The discussion on ALA Connect should be public. Members of the Conference Program Coordinating Team should be included as participants on the Conference Committee Connect page.

- Staff noted that in 2018 the Midwinter meeting in Denver will be later than usual (in February) and the Annual Conference will be in New Orleans in June. Both sites should be a big draw. The 2018 Annual Conference in New Orleans will be during the 300th anniversary year of the city of New Orleans, which may bring with it opportunities.
- The new marketing postcard prepared for the 2017 Midwinter Meeting was distributed. It clearly lays out the content to be available, including the Symposium on the Future of Libraries. Units across ALA have the opportunity to provide ideas/content for the Symposium. Members commented on how they were not aware of all the content available.

Next Face-to-Face Meeting:

- **2017 Midwinter Meeting Joint Conference Committee and Conference Programming Team-- Saturday, January 21, 2017, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.**
- Work will continue on ALA Connect between face-to-face meetings as needed.

Face-to-Face Meeting Participants (AC 2016): Clara Bohrer (chair), Hannah Lee, Melissa Iamónico, Stacy Alesi, Mary Hastler, Aaron Dobbs, Don Rolkvam, Sara Kelly Johns, Marti Goddard, Mary Popp, Mary Ghikas (staff liaison). Absent: Carla Lamb, Ken Stewart, Ta-Shire Tribbett (intern).