ALA COUNCIL ORIENTATION COMMITTEE
REPORT TO COUNCIL
"Creating a Buzz about Council"

BACKGROUND

At the 2007 Midwinter Meeting, Council held a hot topic discussion on “Creating a Buzz about Council” in response to a perceived problem of the scarcity of candidates for Council seats. Two questions were asked:

Question 1: “What are some of the obstacles that prevent ALA members from running for a Council seat?”
Question 2: “What specific suggestions do you have for overcoming these obstacles?”

In May, 2007 ALA President Leslie Burger charged the Council Orientation Committee with reviewing Council’s discussion and formulating some practical, short-term strategies to increase interest in running for Council and removing obstacles that prevent ALA members from standing as candidates for Council.

At the 2008 Annual Meeting, the Committee submitted an interim report to Council (2006-2007 ALA CD#40.1) and received feedback from Council regarding this report.

Subsequently, the 2007-2008 ALA Nominating Committee, which was charged with developing a slate of at least 53 candidates for At-Large Councilor slots for the 2008 ALA election ballot, was able to persuade 63 members to become candidates for At-Large seats. The success of the Nominating Committee in recruiting candidates suggests an increased interest in running for At-Large Councilor seats and the possibility that the perceived problem may not as pressing as thought only one year ago.

However, it is widely acknowledged that investigating methods to shorten the length of ALA meetings, especially the Midwinter Meeting, needs to be vigorously pursued. The primary obstacles to service on Council, according to feedback from members who decline a Nominating Committee invitation to run for Council, continues to be securing funding and release time for attending lengthy ALA meetings to accommodate Council’s Saturday to Wednesday schedule.

The Council Orientation Committee is not the proper venue for pursuing this investigation, however, and confines its suggestions for “Creating a Buzz about Council” to short-term, practical solutions which do not require policy changes, meeting schedule changes or BARC approval.

The Committee is working with ALA staff and other ALA units to pursue the following short-term practical solutions to increase the number of members interested in standing as candidates for Council:

\[\text{OVER} \]
1. Create a FAQ on the ALA web page that will provide information and guidance to both candidates for Council seats and to newly-elected Councilors.

2. Investigate the creation a Council recruitment podcast at the 2008 ALA Annual Conference that could be mounted on the ALA web page.

3. Restructure the orientation and mentoring of newly-elected Councilors to maximize their effectiveness, including the creation of an electronic “Welcome to Council” guide.

4. Lengthen the duration of the Council Orientation Session by thirty minutes beginning at the 2008 Annual Conference so that a more in-depth program for newly-elected and re-elected Councilors can be presented.

5. Restructure the reception for newly-elected Councilors at the Midwinter Meeting to create a “Meet and Greet Your Councilors” reception to increase communication and networking between Councilors and ALA members and to spark member interest in running for Council.

Respectively submitted:

ALA Council Orientation Committee

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* Present at Council Orientation Committee meeting on January 11, 2008