

Combining the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) and Friends of Libraries U.S.A. (FOLUSA) into a New Expanded Division of ALA

History

In the summer of 2007, Keith Fiels, executive director of ALA proposed that FOLUSA and ALTA join to become one division of the association. The fact that the position of executive director for ALTA was open presented, in Fiels' view, an opportunity to join and strengthen the "lay" voice for libraries. In consideration of this opportunity, the Boards of ALTA and FOLUSA established a Steering Committee to consider whether and how a combined division could work for the benefit of both organizations' members and for America's libraries.

FAQs

What will the new division be called?

The Association for Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations – ALTAFF.

Why is this being proposed?

Both the Board of ALTA and the Board of FOLUSA believe that this will strengthen both organizations through increased membership and increased revenues. More importantly, however, we believe that a strong ALA division that reaches as many formalized lay support and governing groups of libraries as possible will be extremely important for America's libraries. This new division will help Trustees and Friends work together at the local, state, and national levels to effectively promote and advocate for libraries. Additionally, we believe that libraries benefit when Trustees and Friends have strong working relationships at the local level and we want to model this through ALTAFF.

Trustees and Friends have very different roles – will this combined division change that?

Absolutely not. We understand that the roles for Trustees, Friends and Foundations are quite different and this difference is reflected in the proposed sections for ALTAFF namely, 1) Trustees, 2) Friends, 3) Foundations, and 4) Corporate Friends.

Will our dues change as a result of ALTAFF?

No. We are committed to bringing in as many Trustees, Friends, Foundations and Corporate members as we can – the more members, the greater the reach to help all library supporters maximize their effectiveness on behalf of libraries. In fact, we are instituting a special opportunity for librarians and library directors who are ALA members to join ALTAFF and get services, support, and a further reduced ALA membership price for their Trustees, Friends, and Foundation members.

Will our services change as a result of ALTAFF

Yes! They will get better. Trustees will still receive *The Voice* but it will be expanded to include additional pages and more “news you can use” to help Trustees be more effective in their home towns. Friends will still receive their newsletter, *News Update* and the wide variety of toolkits, special offers, consulting services, and publications they’ve come to expect. In addition, we will continue to develop new toolkits, special offers, conference programming, and publications to help Trustees, Friends, and Foundations maximize their effectiveness on behalf of libraries. ALTAFF staff also plans to develop webinars and podcasts so Trustees, Friends and Foundation members can have access to learning opportunities when it is most convenient for them.

Where will ALTAFF be located?

ALTAFF headquarters will be located in Philadelphia (the cradle of the American Library Movement!) where the executive director of FOLUSA and acting director of ALTA currently resides.

Is there any dissent from members of the ALTA or FOLUSA Boards?

Initially there was some concern among members of both boards. ALTA board members were concerned that the special legal and fiduciary responsibilities of Trustees would not be reflected if they joined with Friends groups who primarily raise funds and advocate for libraries. FOLUSA Board members were initially concerned that FOLUSA would lose much of its autonomy and public profile if placed within the much larger structure of ALA.

The steering committee has worked hard to address these concerns. The separate sections of the new division will address the separate roles of the different groups. And, while FOLUSA will lose its name and independence, the gain in having a permanent home in the library profession’s premier association (ALA) and the opportunity to work with Trustees to extend its reach to America’s library supporters and governors far outweighs this.

Now, both boards are united unanimously behind ALTAFF!