

MARS COMMITTEES, DISCUSSION GROUPS

MARS COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Committee charges and membership expectations, including those for virtual members, are in the individual committee descriptive statements in the HANDBOOK. Special and ad hoc committees may be established by the Executive Committee. A new committee to meet a unique need may be proposed to the Executive Committee through the legislative process. Membership in ALA and RUSA/MARS are required for committee appointments.

Committees reporting to MARS Executive Committee:

Topical committees

- Education and Training
- Local Systems and Services
- Management of Electronic Reference Services
- Products and Services
- Public Libraries
- User Access to Services
- Virtual Reference (Joint with RSS)

Functional committees:

- Achievement Recognition Certificate
- MARS Best Free Websites
- Outreach
- Planning
- Publications
- Conference Program Planning (two will run concurrently)
- Nominating

Discussion groups:

- Hot Topics in Electronic Reference
- Virtual Reference

Special Categories of Committee Members

There are several ways to expand committee membership to work on large projects, ensure continuity, and keep good members active without formally requesting a change in the committee's charge or composition.

Interns: Appointed by MARS Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect as part of committee assignment process. See RUSA Guide to Policies and Procedures for philosophy.

Consultants: a MARS member can be appointed to a committee for a one year term by the MARS Vice-Chair because of special circumstances. A typical situation would be

when a committee member may be completing a second term but his/her expertise is valuable for completion of a project.

Virtual members: Appointed by the MARS Chair/Chair-Elect as part of the committee process. ALA encourages virtual membership on committees to broaden the pool of involved members. Virtual membership can be a powerful support structure for committees who embark on projects that lend themselves to work between conferences. A virtual member is encouraged, but not required, to attend conferences, and is expected to contribute to committee activities throughout the year.

Subcommittees: Any committee may create an ad-hoc subcommittee with the approval of the MARS Executive Committee. Subcommittee members need not be members of the main committee; this can be a way of bringing new people in, or keeping previous members (such as a past Chair) around to advise on a project.

Liaisons: Committees are encouraged to maintain informal contact with other appropriate units of ALA, but may not make commitments on projects or programs without Executive Committee approval. (See MARS Liaison Guidelines.)

MARS Executive Committee and RUSA "functional" committees: See MARS Officers and Liaisons section of the HANDBOOK for duties. Be aware of which RUSA functional committees affect MARS committee work. If needed, request assistance or advice from Executive Committee liaisons to get committee work forwarded and approved.

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To volunteer for a MARS Committee or to learn more, contact MARS through our electronic form at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusavolunteers/marsonlinecommittee.htm> , or contact the ALA/RUSA office for information and referrals.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARS COMMITTEE CHAIRS

This brief overview of the tasks of Committee Chairs should be used in conjunction with the *RUSA Guide to Policies and Procedures* available at

<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/guidetopoliciesandproced/guidepolicies.htm> .

Special projects, publications, and programs may involve additional work; consult with the MARS Chair and/or the RUSA Executive Director.

At the ALA level:

- Schedule Conference Meetings: Meeting Request Forms will be sent to MARS committee chairs from the ALA Conference Arrangements Office. Committee

chairs should complete the electronic forms in accordance with MARS meeting policy and times (Appendix B) and communicate the times requested to the MARS Scheduling Coordinator, who will monitor requests for possible conflicts and other problems.

- Use services from ALA: During conference, ALA offices offer support services. These include typewriters, photocopying services, and personal computers. Many up-to-date documents are distributed here during conference, for example skeleton schedules of future conferences and ALA Council proposals. RUSA has its own table where you can get specific help, leave messages and reports for RUSA leadership, etc. Photocopying for MARS committee business can be charged to the RUSA account numbers, which can be obtained at the RUSA table or directly from the RUSA Executive Director. This service can take several hours so plan ahead.

At the RUSA level:

- Be knowledgeable about RUSA procedures and policies; obtain and read RUSA handbooks and manuals. As a section of RUSA, MARS must comply with all divisional policies. Consult with the MARS Executive Committee and/or RUSA Executive Director.
- May attend RUSA Board meetings as an observer: The MARS Chair is a member of the Board and reports on all MARS activities and budget requests. Committee Chairs may attend as observers but generally may not speak at the meeting unless invited by the Board to comment on an item directly related to their work, or with other prior arrangements.

The Board usually has a lengthy agenda set in advance. If a MARS committee has a project such as a program or publication which will need Board approval, it must first be approved by the MARS Executive Committee in time for it to get placed on the RUSA Board agenda. MARS committees, via the Executive Committee, may suggest items of new business to be brought before the RUSA Board through the MARS Chair.

- Help staff the RUSA booth at Annual. This is coordinated by the RUSA Membership Committee. Individuals are usually recruited to work shifts of an hour or two.
- Suggest appropriate appointees for RUSA committee positions to the RUSA Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect.
- Use services from RUSA: Help and advice from RUSA Executive Director; RUSA stationery, documents and brochures; reimbursement for committee expenses under \$50 per year; names and addresses of other RUSA divisional and sectional officers and Chairs.

At the MARS level:

- Read the Handbook, including the Bylaws and scheduling information.

- Attend a meeting of the Executive Committee at Midwinter and Annual and report on your committee's activities. Oral reports must be given at Executive Committee meetings. The first Executive meeting of each conference is a joint meeting of the Executive Committee, Committee Chairs, and MARS Planning members. Chairs should plan to be present at this meeting for an orientation and to share what each committee has been doing and is expecting to accomplish at the conference. At the Annual Conference, incoming chairs are encouraged to attend as well. The Executive Committee usually meets at least two more times for general business. A Committee Chair should notify the MARS Chair in advance regarding which meeting he/she will attend. If absolutely necessary, the committee Chair may designate another committee member to make the report. Depending on the status of projects, you may need early approval to move ahead, or may wish to report at a later meeting when you have had a chance to complete an assignment. You are encouraged to attend all Executive Committee meetings in order to stay abreast of MARS activities and related RUSA information. Committee Chairs are not voting members of the Executive Committee but may participate in discussions. Each MARS Committee has a liaison from the Executive Committee. You should know who on the Executive Committee is your liaison and keep him or her informed of your work.
- The MARS Committee and Discussion Group Reporting Form is completed during the conference and preferably given to the chair of the Planning Committee before the end of the conference, or soon after the conference.
- After the conference, written copies of committee agendas, minutes and other documents should be sent or given to MARS Chair, Vice-Chair, Planning Committee Chair, and liaison from the Executive Committee.
- Submit material for "Messages from MARS" and MARS-L:

"Messages" appears quarterly on the RUSA Web site as part of RUSA Update. Reports on committee activities should be submitted to the editor at or immediately following every conference; progress reports, announcements, and requests for input from members can also be sent for the issues that come out prior to conference. "Messages" may also be used by committees and discussion groups to inform members of new developments, ideas, etc., in informative articles describing such in "Messages."

- Submit budget requests. If you expect your committee to need more than the automatic allocation (currently \$50.00), you should notify the MARS Chair early in the fall of the year prior to the fiscal year in question (ALA's fiscal year begins September 1). This clearly requires a lot of advance planning and would be for major projects. Conference programs are handled through a separate budget process.
- Use services from MARS:

The MARS Secretary distributes the Executive Committee minutes to all committee Chairs, generally over the MARSEXEC listserv.

Committee appointments: The Vice-Chair makes appointments for the coming year and conducts all formal correspondence with appointees. You will be sent a copy of the appointment acceptance forms and a revised roster when the process is complete, usually shortly before the Annual Conference. The Chair will make any short-term or interim appointments to fill out a current vacancy.

At the level of your committee:

- Make recommendations for committee appointments:

Appointments are made by the Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect during the spring. Soon after the end of the Midwinter Meeting, you must send the "MARS Committee Membership - Status Report" form to the Vice-Chair to suggest names for new appointments, to note which current members should be reappointed, and to recommend the next committee Chair. Feel free to consult with the Vice-Chair by phone or email about any concerns you may have. Pass on to the Vice-Chair any copies of letters of inquiry which you receive, or the names of visitors to your committee who may be interested in appointment; be aware of ALA policies on committee service and of the availability of intern appointments. Avoid guaranteeing someone an appointment; the Vice-Chair makes all decisions. Vacancies occurring mid-term are filled by the MARS Chair.

- Maintain up-to-date roster:

Your committee roster is derived from ALA's membership database and from RUSA's record of committee appointments. Make sure that committee members update their personal information with ALA, and communicate to the Chair changes such as resignations, and any discrepancies in appointment information.

- Lead and monitor committee work between conferences:

You should report regularly to committee members between conferences: to remind people of tasks and decisions, to continue discussions that were begun at conference, to follow up on assignments, and, before each conference, to announce meeting times and outline the upcoming meeting agenda. Send copies of all agendas and formal correspondence to the MARS Chair and to your Executive Committee liaison.

- Run meetings at conferences:

Be aware of ALA policies on running meetings (such as those for open/closed meetings, smoking, etc.); check the [ALA Handbook](#).

Have everyone introduce themselves and sign an attendance sheet. Take minutes or designate someone to do so, and review and approve them by the next conference. Pass out the Committee Interest Forms. Encourage all committee members to participate; keep meeting on schedule. Bring extra copies of agendas and working documents for observers and forgetful committee members. Think ahead to new projects or directions. Send the attendance sheet to the Chair of Outreach, but remember to convey the names of potential committee members to the Section Chair.

Committees are encouraged to hold a discussion forum at least once every two years. See "Tips for Discussion Forums" (this [Handbook](#)).

If meetings are canceled or changed, post a notice or **have** a committee member at the assigned meeting room to inform visitors.

- Ensure transition from year to year:

Brief the incoming chair on the status of projects.

Document and date the work of the committee. Pass on files as per "MARS Archives Guidelines" (this [Handbook](#)). Send agenda for Annual to newly-appointed members.

- Maintain Committee Web page:

Administer or delegate development and maintenance of committee's web page. The web page shall include a description of current committee projects, recently-completed projects that remain timely, contact information for the Chair, and a pointer to the master MARS roster. The "current projects" section of the committee page may reside on the official MARS Web site or on a site managed by a committee member to ensure timeliness.

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