ALA WEBSITE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ALA MIDWINTER MEETING
San Diego, CA
Monday, January 12, 2004

MEETING MINUTES

WAC Members in attendance: John Duke (Chair/ALCTS), Rochelle Ballard (ACRL), Pauline Baughman (PLA), Diane Bisom (LAMA), Constance J. Champlin (AASL), Michelle Frisque (LITA), Walter Minkel (ALSC), E. Paige Weston (RUSA), Rory Litwin (member), Karen Schneider (member), Kim Gabert (intern).

WAC Members absent: Tracey Firestone (YALSA), Francis Picart (ALTA), Audrey Gorman (ASCLA), Jon Cawthorne (Publishing), Abigail Leah Plumb (intern).

Staff: Debi Lewis, Sherri Vanyek

Guests: Jim Kuhn, Norman Maas, P.Michael McCulley, George Porter, Holly Yu

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1 **Introductions**
   The meeting was called to order at 8:44 AM and introductions were made.

2 **Adoption of agenda**
   The agenda was adopted with some changes in order of business. It was noted that the ITTS organization chart would be distributed later in the meeting.

3 **Approval of minutes**
   Moved and approved: Minutes of the meeting on Monday, June 23, 2003, at the Annual Conference

4 **Chair report**
   4.1 Communications preferences (Opt in/opt out)
   The committee reviewed a letter from the chair of the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee, Nancy Kranich, urging that the WAC support an opt-in policy for communications received from ALA

   Moved and passed that: Recommend ALA adopt a communications preferences "opt in" policy for commercial programs and services other than those originating within ALA.

   4.2 Committee charge
   The committee reviewed a proposed change to its charge, to read: "To develop, review and recommend Association policies for the ALA Web site to Council and editorial or structural policies to ALA staff. To provide oversight and guidance to ALA staff responsible for implementing those policies. To provide an ongoing channel for member communication by working closely with other units, committees and offices of the Association. To consider and make recommendations concerning major technical issues or proposed changes, including evaluating, testing and implementing Web-based

products and services used by Association members or by the public. To advise the Association on priorities and strategies that promote utilization and continued development of the ALA Web site."

Moved and Passed That: The charge as revised be forwarded to ALA Committee on Organization for consideration.

5   Usability Subcommittee
Subcommittee chair Karen Schneider reviewed resolution of long URLs and on-line balloting. The subcommittee chair requested a review of the workload over the next six months and a review of the separation of subcommittee vs. ALA staff work and responsibility.

The Usability Subcommittee issued a recommendation for Website usability testing. ALA staff indicated that there is already approval to hire a consultant for usability testing and that this is underway. ALA staff also requested recommendations for consulting firms to help with this work. The Usability Subcommittee will coordinate recommendations.

The subcommittee recommend that ALA replace the Website search engine. Such a change has already been approved and a consultant is being hired. ALA will work with the WAC through the Usability Subcommittee as this project progresses.

The subcommittee also recommend that ALA investigate adopting a new content management system. ALA staff reported that the current vendor has obligations to fulfill with the current system, but that ALA will keep its options open for the future and involve the WAC in any investigation or change.

The ALA Publishing Office and the WAC are both concerned that the ALA staff be supported in dealing with usability issues. It was noted that the Website may be the most important ALA publication. The WAC requested Publishing advise us on the major issues that it sees as needing correction.

Some discussion centered specifically around the Career Leads Online and Hot Jobs Online pages: while there have been complaints that these pages are difficult to find, the WebTrends statistics indicate that they have been well used.

6   Chair report (continued)

6.1 Subcommittees and assessment of WAC
To improve communication, the WAC Chair will make more frequent reports to ALA Council and ALA management, including brief summaries of activities to enhance forward movement and to help representatives keep their respective divisions informed. It was recommended that the subcommittees also issue monthly reports to WEBADV and that ALA staff issue reports at least twice monthly. Both WAC members and guests were encouraged to participate in the subcommittees and and sign up sheets were passed out.

Moved and Passed That: The Web Development Manager be appointed to serve ex officio on the Website Advisory Committee, in addition to the Director of ITTS.

6.2 Posting ALA programs on Web

Discussed controversy over withdrawing content from the Website in response to a vendor's concern. The Membership Subcommittee will work with ALA staff to develop 1) an addition to toolkit for Web authors of a statement of liability as to the appropriateness of posting, and 2) a statement of process to be used when challenges to content are made.

6.3 ALA committee pages: committee charge formats

The WAC approved by e-mail a standardized format for ALA and Council committees. It was agreed that a similar standardized template should be used for committees at the divisional level. The issue was referred to the Membership Subcommittee for review and to prepare a formal recommendation.

6.4 Calendar of business meetings held outside Annual and Midwinter

An ALA committee expressed concern that the calendar of business meetings held outside the Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting was difficult to use and out of date. The Membership Subcommittee will review the calendar and make recommendations.

6.5 ALA committees: charge formats

There was discussion of the meeting time of WAC, which at Midwinter was in conflict with ALA Council. Apparently, this will not be a problem at Annual. The chair will examine the schedule, looking at two two-hour meeting blocks instead of one four-hour meeting, as well as openings that do not conflict with Council or divisional board meetings.

7   Staff report

ALA staff Debi Lewis and Sherri Vanyek reported on progress and issues with the ALA Website.

7.1 Standards and Guidelines

An outline of proposed standards and guidelines to encourage a consistent Web style and presentation was distributed by ALA staff, generating a wide-ranging discussion. Examples mentioned were accessibility guidelines, styling, "nice" URLs, site navigation and breadcrumbs standardization, side site navigation bar, and graphics and layout for "alt" text. It was noted that ALA has graphic designers on staff who can help with graphics.

Currently, news releases on the ALA site use AP format, although different units within ALA use different styles. The *Chicago Manual of Style* is recommended for general use; the most commonly needed recommendations from this style manual will be placed on the Website.

It was emphasized that there are content liability issues in Web publishing. Opinion versus fact must be clearly delineated, coupled with an awareness of the audience.

There is not a good process for removing or storing outdated content. http://archive.ala.org only holds content from the old site and is not a process for archiving content from the current site.

Further discussion centered on security and access. There have been instances of people

sharing with others logins to the content management system. It was stressed that anyone using the content management system should be trained. Sharing logins is a breach of security and is prohibited. The WAC supports ALA staff in suspending an account that has been compromised.

The committee endorsed the outline to the manual presented by staff. Staff will try to have a draft of the manual ready by ALA Annual Conference. WAC urged that the style manual be developed "in public," with the outline and early drafts posted to the Website, where content managers can review, comment upon, and begin to apply it. Staff will pass policy enforcement recommendations by the WAC.

7.2 Search Engine
Problems with the search engine are being addressed. A consultant is being retained for help in selecting a new engine. This is on a fast track, with resolution expected before Annual Conference. The Usability Subcommittee will help to test any new engine. It is not expected that a switch to a new engine will be disruptive to the site.

7.3 Compression software
An offer was made by a vendor of compression and acceleration software to permit ALA to use its software in exchange for product endorsement. It is unclear what form this endorsement might take. D. Lewis will follow up, but the committee is uncomfortable with entangling endorsements, noting that it is probably a violation of ALA policy. Other options for speeding up the Website may be available. There was consensus that the site would benefit from greater speed, but analysis should be performed first as to the causes of slowness.

7.4 IMIS
Issues with the IMIS association management system were discussed, including ways to make it more flexible. It is possible that IMIS could be replaced as staff examines its options. The Membership Subcommittee will be consulted as appropriate.

8   Content Management Subcommittee
Subcommittee chair Michelle Frisque reported on activities. Complaints have centered on pages not displaying in the way intended, on site being difficult to use, and the site not being user friendly. Some modules have yet to be rolled out, such as on-line payment for dues. Content Management Subcommittee will work with staff to continue to identify issues. Additional discussion continued on the intended audience – members of ALA or the general public.

9   Maintenance and Archives Subcommittee
Subcommittee chair Diane Bisom reviewed activities. The subcommittee expects to become more active as other issues are addressed. It will begin working with ITTS on a means to archive the ALA Website.

10 Membership Subcommittee
Subcommittee chair Paige Weston reported that it has begun working with Mary Ghikas on developing a database of ALA activities over time. The subcommittee will work with ALA staff on the issues identified during the meeting.

11 Planning
ALA staff S. Vanyek and D. Lewis reported on events not covered elsewhere. Upcoming

issues include a dues manager, support for an on-line community system, a new on-line store with single shopping cart concept where ALA divisions will get space to market their products, a clearinghouse job placement center with an integrated approach to all job opportunities, and new list processing software. WAC will help to determine criteria, assist with locating consultants where appropriate, and test the components.

The WAC chair will list upcoming plans and solicit input to help set priorities for ALA staff.

12 Adjournment
Moved and Passed: The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 PM..

Prepared by Kim Gabert (WAC intern)