Midwinter Changes Affecting ALSC Committee Work

What is happening to the ALA Midwinter Meeting?

For the past two years, ALA has been discussing and considering the Midwinter Meeting. ALA has identified that the Midwinter Meeting has seen a continuing decrease in member attendance and a subsequent decrease in exhibitor attendance resulting in declines in ALA revenue generated for Midwinter Meeting.

After considerable discussion with ALA leadership, staff, and members, ALA has decided that Indianapolis 2021 will be the sunset of Midwinter and a newly branded event will launch in January 2022 in San Antonio to better address the needs of and bring value to the profession.

Per an update posted on ALA Connect on the Future of Midwinter (ALA login required):

“The new event will feature education, networking and engagement activities that support ALA’s core values, key action areas and strategic directions. This will include issue forums focused on Advocacy, Information Policy, Professional & Leadership Development, and Equity Diversity & Inclusion. There will be 3 primary content streams that include the Future of Libraries, Readers Advisory, and EDI programming.”

Who will this affect?

Changes to Midwinter Meeting will impact all ALSC committees and governance groups, to some degree.

How will it affect committees?

Committees that work virtually throughout the year and do not hold meetings at conferences will be impacted minimally.

Committees that operate primarily in-person will need to begin discussing the best methods for transitioning the committee’s work so that it can be done virtually, year-round rather than focused at in-person conferences.
When will changes be rolled out?

Midwinter 2020 will be the last time ALSC process committee meeting space will be planned for a Midwinter event. Other changes are rolling out at the Midwinter 2020 and will primarily impact ALA staff, including ALSC staff.

What is ALSC doing in preparation for the changes?

Preparation for how the changes to the Midwinter Meeting will impact ALSC committee work has already begun. ALSC leadership will be discussing the alignment of ALSC’s committee structure to be flexible/adaptable moving forward; develop transition planning for committees; and other change management issues throughout the day on Saturday, Jan. 25th during the ALSC Board of Directors meeting, the ALSC Priority Group Consultants meeting, and the Leadership & ALSC meeting during the ALA 2020 Midwinter Meeting. A February Online Community Forum will be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 at 12 Noon Central. And the online feedback form will remain open through February 18 to collect responses.

The goal is to finalize and adopt these changes during the ALSC Board’s February 20, 2020 online meeting in order to align with the timing of President-Elect Kirby McCurtis’ spring appointments which will begin at the end of February.

What are the working assumptions about the meeting space at Midwinter 2021?

At this time, ALSC is working on the assumption that for Midwinter 2021 there will only be enough space to accommodate governance and budget meetings. ALSC has been assured that ALSC award and Notable committees will continue to be provided space to meet in January.

The ALSC Board is considering the expectation that all committees, except award, will be hybrid of virtual and face-to-face work. Process committees will not be required to meet at annual, but they may do so. The majority of work would take place virtually, but the annual meeting will give committees an opportunity to meet at All-Committee, share ideas in person and network within their committees, their priority area as well as explore other committees.

What did Midwinter 2020 look like?

The traditional Saturday afternoon Board meeting had to be switched with the Leadership & ALSC meeting slot on Saturday morning to accommodate an ALA no-conflict time.

Most other changes impact the ALA staff.
● Adjusted the overall ALSC schedule of meetings, in consultation with ALSC leadership, to comply with ALA no-conflict meeting times.
● Staff had to learn new processes for completing work, accessing materials, and printing onsite documents.
● New delivery procedures to move meeting materials between ALA Office storage area and meeting rooms. Staff had to learn a new system and adjust to bumps. Feedback will be provided to ALA Conference Services.
● Elimination of trunks as the main means of shipping materials to an onsite conference. This impacted the amount and types of materials sent and the new process negatively impacted staff time to arrange for delivery of materials.

Have other options for Midwinter been discussed?

ALA Conference Services continues to explore and develop the new event and held three focus groups with various stakeholders at the 2020 Midwinter to gather input for use in the design process.

How can I obtain more information?

PGCs and the ALSC Board recognize changes are happening quickly and they are discussing ways to help support chairs/co-chairs and members through this change.

● ALSC will develop a method to manage ongoing communication about the changes. A form has been developed to collect your thoughts and questions so that they can be addressed. Please complete prior to Tuesday, February 18, 2020 to help inform Board discussion.  

What resources are available to transition to virtual committees?

Many committees already work virtually and some in person committees have been increasing their virtual engagement through phone and video meetings. Committees that work virtually may be asked to share their experiences through a blog post.

Committees also can refer to the Resources for Committee Work web page to support virtual committee work:

● ALSC website - Best Practices for Virtual Committees, including how to use Zoom for meetings and working through ALA Connect
● The 2018 PGC/Chair Orientation session covers best practices for chairing virtual committees:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUaJrlOZKc&feature=youtu.be
• Additionally, new resources also will be developed and shared with committees throughout the transition.
• ALA Conference Services October report also noted the following, “During the conference committee meeting, it was recognized and discussed that members will need guidance on how to meet differently moving forward. A subcommittee, to be chaired by Patty Wong, was formed to work on tips for members and committees to conduct their business more efficiently in a virtual capacity.”

What should we be doing right now?

• Be flexible and encourage your committee members to do the same.
• Encourage questions and share them with your PGC so ALSC leadership can seek answers
• Talk to your PGC about any issues that need to be addressed during the transition
• Monitor and share with your committee members any communication from ALA and ALSC

• While meeting room space will not be provided, is there an opportunity for those able to travel to meet informally/socially and network at the new January event being developed; participate in/attend educational programming at the new event?

What if my employer will no longer support my attendance at a conference if I will not be attending required meetings?

We understand that it can be problematic for individuals whose employers typically do not support time off or expenses for in-person conference attendance, unless it is required of a committee position. Members should refer to the ALA resource “Making Your Case to Attend” for helpful steps to take and information to share with employers to advocate for support of conference attendance.

Additionally, by removing the attendance requirement, ALSC will increase engagement and create a more equitable and inclusive environment. As barriers to participation are removed (i.e. requiring attendance), more members will be able to participate in ALSC. Additionally, volunteer members will have more meaningful opportunities to engage throughout the entire service year rather than at two events per year.

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