

LSSIRT NEWSLETTER

January 2004

From the President...

As the new president of LSSIRT, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank outgoing President Carolyn Tate for all that she has done during the last year. Carolyn accomplished a great deal during her year in office. One very significant change was a dramatic increase in the number of ALA committee appointments for LSSIRT members. LSSIRT now has 10 members serving on key ALA Committees thanks to Carolyn's good work.

Unfortunately, Carolyn was unable to be in Toronto for the Annual Conference this year and we were not able to thank her for all she has done to advance support staff issues within ALA. Hopefully, we will be able to remedy this at the Midwinter meeting in San Diego.

I want to tell everyone how exciting it is to be the President of LSSIRT during this time in ALA history. Indeed, it is ALA history in the making. The doors have been opened wide for support staff within ALA. LSSIRT has been in existence for a while now; however, never before have the opportunities been so great for support staff within the organization.

The Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Support Staff (COPE 3) has put a spotlight on our issues, and ALA has shown commitment to making positive change happen. The COPE 3 steering committee's final report

has a number of recommendations and the ALA Executive Council has assigned to staff liaisons the task of developing implementation action plans for these recommendations. Their reports are to be presented to the Executive Council at the October meeting, but we don't have to wait that long to get started on work LSSIRT may be assigned.



Diane Fay, 2003/04 LSSIRT President

LSSIRT has been working on a draft strategic plan and hopes to start developing strategies to address the issues raised by the COPE3 delegates. Addressing the issues raised during COPE3 will not be easy, and the LSSIRT Steering Committee will need the help of every LSSIRT member.

My plan is to appoint as many members of LSSIRT as possible to LSSIRT committees. This is a very exciting time for LSSIRT and we all need to be part of what is taking place. A number of ALA Council members have come forward, offering to assist us as we work

toward making the recommendations of COPE 3 a reality. We now need an army of support staff to work with them to make things happen. Please contact me if you would like to be appointed to a committee. Take a few minutes to read the COPE3 report (which can be found on the LSSIRT website) and let me know what topics in the report you would be interested in working on as part of a committee. I will try to accommodate as many members of LSSIRT as possible on the committees. I can be reached at dianefayoncape@comcast.net or by mail at 52 Lovell's Road, Cotuit, MA 02635.

What we have accomplished and the opportunities that are open to us today are a direct result of the hard work and commitment of past LSSIRT Presidents and steering committee members. I look forward to working with the current steering committee, and with all of you, in continuing the advancement of support staff within ALA.

More inside....

- Cope III report
- Bylaws Report
- Toronto meetings

Overlapping discussions: Accreditation and Certification by COE and Education Assembly

Alice "Ali" Poffinberger
COE member and LSSIRT Member-at-Large
Duke University

Support staff issues were central to the agendas in the Committee on Education (COE) meetings, held June 21 and 23, and in the Education Assembly session, held June 23, at the annual conference in Toronto. This was a direct result of the recent Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Support Staff (COPE3).

Since we both served as COPE3 delegates, fellow COE committee member Dave Dowell and I provided a summary about the Congress, outlined the ALA Executive Board's response to the COPE3 steering committee's final report, and enumerated next steps. I listed the following COPE3 recommendations as

items of specific concern for COE:

- 3.2.1 (Library Technical Assistant program accreditation)
- 4.1.1 (formal education recognized at all levels)
- 4.1.4 (development of a Continuing Education Clearinghouse)
- 5.3.1 (inclusion of support staff in language and agendas)

My report will concentrate on the discussions that followed regarding LTA accreditation and certification for support staff. These are brief summaries of the wide-ranging discussion:

a. The problem with the draft LTA program accreditation criteria document is that it is not binding (it sets no guidelines and standards). Finalizing the document is just the first step in a long process for getting LTA programs accredited by ALA. Nonetheless, the committee recognizes the need to move forward with changes to

the current document and get it to Council, ALA's policy-making body. (A full-committee discussion of the draft LTA Accreditation Criteria document was postponed until COE's meeting at Midwinter, so that more committee members could be present.)

b. COE requested that a Canadian visitor who was present at the meetings gather information on how certification/accreditation works for support staff there. What struck COE members from the U.S. as unusual is that Canadian library education programs support LTA's and MLS's concurrently, and the programs appear to "coexist well." COE members also wanted to hear more about the Canadian programs because neither the United States nor Canada have centralized authorities setting standards for accreditation or certification. The Europeans are able to "charter" individuals (an option put forward at an LSSIRT-sponsored annual program in Toronto) because they have national education programs and, therefore, centralized bodies setting standards for "chartering." In fact, the community colleges in the U.S. that offer LTA programs already have regional bodies that accredit them and set standards. How have the Canadians overcome these obstacles?

c. Accreditation is incredibly expensive for the institutions concerned. Other groups in ALA that were originally interested in sponsoring certification/accreditation programs dropped their pursuit of these initiatives when they found out the expense involved.

All this information could lead one to be pessimistic about the

possibilities for LTA accreditation and support staff certification within ALA. However, one must remember that COE is a body of Council, and is therefore entirely committed to doing the work that is set for it by Council. So, if Council decides that LTA programs are to be accredited and library support staff certified, COE must help find a way to carry out these directives. However, because they carry out the work, COE members are realistic about the hurdles they, and other ALA groups concerned, face.

For that reason, COE is hoping to sponsor a program on accreditation/certification issues at the Annual meeting in Orlando, if only to tease out these problems so that they can be recognized and addressed. Possible presenters will include representatives of organizations already involved in "the doing of" accrediting and certifying. COE has requested that LSSIRT cosponsor this program. (As of this writing, there is some doubt that, as a body of Council, COE is permitted to plan programming.)

I have just been appointed a full member of COE (timely, eh?), rather than serving as a liaison only. I intend to keep you apprised of further

developments regarding support staff issues, and to do all I can to make sure that work on these issues is advanced within this committee and its associated Education Assembly.

COPE III Status Report

Martha Parsons, LSSIRT Treasurer and COPE III Steering Committee Member

The ALA 3rd Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Library Support Staff (COPEIII) was held six months ago, so it seems like a good time to take a look at what has been accomplished, and what is in the works.

Just a few weeks after the Congress, the COPE III Steering Committee Chair, Julie Huiskamp, sent a "memo on inclusiveness" to ALA staff, Divisions, and Committees. In it she outlined the importance of inclusiveness to support staff and asked that inclusive language be used in all ALA communications whenever appropriate and possible. As a result of that memo we have seen ongoing efforts by ALA to comply, including the Public Information Office revising the language in their press release template.

A significant accomplishment was that Implementation Recommendations were written, and then submitted and approved by the ALA Executive Board at their Fall 2003 meeting (Oct. 11). These recommendations were compiled by Mary Ghikas, ALA Senior Associate Executive Director, with collaboration from Lorelle Swader and other ALA staff, as well as review and feedback from the COPE III Steering Committee. The Implementation Recommendations are based directly upon the recommendations that were included in the COPE III Final Report and have taken into consideration "related activities underway within the Association." At the time of the writing of this article the Implementation

Recommendations are not on the web yet, but should be posted soon

on the COPE III web site at http://www.ala.org/congress/3rd_congress/.

My observations, from listening in on the COPE III Delegates discussion list, are that the enthusiasm from the Congress is still strong and that there are many people working on implementing the spirit of the Congress in many ways. It is exciting to see this trickle down effect as individuals take a lead in implementing change on local, state, and regional levels.



Diane Fay, Kathleen Murphy and Martha Parsons at ALA in Toronto

Here are a few examples:

- The Georgia Library Association has created a Task Force on Paraprofessional Issues, with a focus on library education.
- The Utah Library Association is sponsoring a mini-Congress to consider a course of action that can be taken to support library support staff development in Utah.
- David Dowell, Director of Learning Resources, at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, CA has

submitted an article about COPE III to be published in the Journal of Education for Library and Information Science.

- Many have been spreading the word about the Congress at their state library association and/or state support staff association conferences.

In the Implementation Recommendations, LSSIRT is frequently cited as the lead group in researching, organizing, and coordinating the recommended efforts. It is going to take a considerable amount of focus and effort, both individually and collectively, to accomplish all that has been laid out as "doable and sustainable". If you would like to be involved, please contact the LSSIRT President, Diane Fay [dianefayoncape@comcast.net] and let her know that you'd like to be involved. Many opportunities, at varying levels of time commitment, are available for members to contribute.

ALA LIBRARY SUPPORT STAFF INTERESTS ROUND TABLE STEERING COMMITTEE/MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Saturday, June 21, 2003**

1. Diane Fay announced the resolution to include support staff in the ALA salary survey will be presented to Council during this conference.
2. Martha Parsons reported the COPE-3 recommendations were well-received by the ALA Executive Board. Diane reiterated we can begin now to initiate action items. The inclusive language directive is being spread among all divisions and round tables. Jennifer will present a proposal to American Libraries for a quarterly column written by support staff. If accepted, the chair of the Publications/Communications Committee (currently Jennifer) will coordinate the submissions and editing.
3. Chair-elect Jim Hill is coordinating the Orlando programs. LSSIRT will sponsor one program on COPE-3 and co-sponsor one program with LAMA entitled "Building career development opportunities for support staff."
4. Kent Slade reported the Constitution and Bylaws proposed changes were approved and the position of Secretary/Treasurer has been split. Jennifer will continue as Secretary; we now need a Treasurer.
5. Alice Poffinberger moved to place on the ballot a proposal to increase the LSSIRT membership dues from \$7 to \$10. Kathleen Murphy seconded. Motion carried.
6. Carol Brey-Casiano, incoming ALA President Elect, visited the meeting and encouraged participation by LSSIRT members on ALA committees.
7. The Library Journal reception for Support Staff of the Year and Supporter of Support Staff of the Year awards has been cancelled due to SARS.
8. Our Night Out Dinner cruise is a SOLD-OUT event: The total revenue is \$5,320 and our profit will be around \$665.



Ali Poffinberger, Cindy Ahrens, and Carolyn Tate at LSSIRT Meeting in Toronto.

Round Table Coordinating Committee Report

Diane Fay, LSSIRT President

The Round Table Coordinating Committee met in Toronto on Friday, June 20, 2003. Due to the SARS related travel problems associated with this particular ALA Annual Conference, attendance at the meeting was poor. In fact, no Committee' chair was in attendance, and there were no agenda items for discussion.

Despite these factors, the meeting moved ahead. ALA staff representative for member programs and services Mary Ginkas and ALA past-president John Berry attended the meeting and provided a brief update on that morning's ALA Executive Board session. Their overview included the Executive Board's vote to send the COPE 3 steering committee's final report to ALA staff liaisons

for the creation of an implementation plan the report's recommendations. In addition, Ginkas and Berry outlined how updates to recommendations resulting from both COPE 1 and Cope 2 are reported. They then moved on to report about a discussion, which had, taken place at that morning's ALA Executive Council session on the agenda item "Who speaks for ALA."

It appears the "Who speaks for ALA" discussion came about when one of the Organization's round tables took a position that differed from ALA's official position on an issue. The round table then issued a written statement outlining their position. ALA felt that the round table's written statement violated the organization's policy 9.1. The

round tables were informed that Council would be addressing the topic and drafting a document that would spell out for everyone the potential consequences of this type of violation.

The meeting ended with a discussion about round table representation in ALA Council and how difficult it is at times to "put a face on" the councilor representing one's round table. Round table representatives present asked that their councilors be invited to future meetings of the Round Table Coordinating Committee.

Bylaws Committee Report

Kent Slade, ConBylaws Committee Chair

This year we proposed 13 changes to the Constitution and Bylaws. All were approved. Most were minor, technical changes that sought to clarify the meaning of the passage or make it simpler to understand. The major change was to separate the Secretary/Treasurer into two positions, one for Secretary and one for Treasurer. Since this position

is now active, it should show up on the ballot for the 2004-2005 year and the President was recommended to appoint an individual to fill the position until position is filled by election.

From the Newsletter Editor

2003 was an exciting year for LSSIRT and Library Support Staff. This issue of the newsletter covers the events that occurred since the last issue in March. Apologies for the delay in publication. Due to changes in editor duties, unexpected events (including two and a half weeks with a cold and laryngitis) and changes in job responsibilities, we were unable to finish this newsletter originally scheduled for October, until now. Watch for details on the events of ALA Midwinter in the LSSIRT Newsletter in February. Have a safe and happy New Year!

Paulette Feld, LSSIRT Newsletter Editor
