

Thursday, January 20, 2022

TO: ALA Council
From: Mike Marlin, Chair, ALA Constitution and Bylaws (C&B) Committee)
RE: ALA Bylaws Amendment
INFORMATION REPORT/Action Requested

Introduction/background:

The 2021-22 C&B Committee began conversations and deliberations in September 2021 and has been busy since. In addition to discussion and weighing of motions concerning CD46.1, item 2 (Round Tables), C&B held in depth discussions among its members and in conjunction with the Policy Monitoring Committee regarding the formalization process for the LibLearnX (LLX) event in 2022 and beyond. ALA's Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual still contain references to the Midwinter Conference (proper) and a midwinter conference on the calendar in the months preceding the summertime ALA Conference. The committees concurred that current action on our part is not feasible in the transitory ALA governance environment, nor warranted, as the informal or formal adoption/codification of LLX is not within our joint purview. We have recommended that the ALA Conference Committee and Office of Conference Services, along with ALA Executive Board undertake this important matter so that it may be addressed by the governing body – ALA Council.

Additionally, C&B held discussions about the planning process for eventual Constitution and/or Bylaws revamping/revision that in the near future is likely to result from the Association's ongoing governance review process. In November C&B met with leaders of the Transforming ALA Governance (TAG) Working Group, Resolutions Committee, Committee On Organization, and ALA senior staff for a broad ranging, general conversation and overview of TAG's work and direction. The takeaway for C&B is, whatever and whenever a new governance model is voted upon and passed by ALA Council, ALA Bylaws and/or Constitution will necessitate revision, change, and reconstruction. Anticipating C&B as the potential committee for referral by Council, and the need to bring together subject matter experts to assist us, C&B discussed a process that involves other ALA members and/or stakeholders with experience crafting a clear and unambiguous set of bylaws and/or constitution.

Action requested by ALA Council

ALA Council 2021 Annual Virtual Conference
CD#46.1, Item 2 (Round Tables)

DRAFT OF MOTION:

Background:

The ALA Constitution and Bylaws Committee (C&B), with input from the Round Table Coordinating Assembly (RTCA) conveners and bylaws subcommittee, ALA Legal Counsel, ALA Parliamentarian, ALA Membership Office, ALA Governance Office, and ALA Senior Executive Staff, discussed items assigned in 2021 CD #46.1, Item 2 (Round Tables).

- Resolved 1 (Round Tables are a vital part of the ALA structure) provided the framework for discussions around the remaining Resolved clauses.
- Resolved 2 (baseline membership) was perceived as straightforward; see Action Item 1.
- Resolved 3 (common bylaws template), after much discussion and deliberation, was perceived as actionable in its current form. Discussions related to Resolved 3 included review of a March 2021 RTCA Round Table Bylaws Template and several meetings with hitherto mentioned stakeholders. Mutual agreement on sections needing clarification, and suggested language defining round tables as ALA internal units aligned with the ALA Bylaws, facilitated the commitment to a revised RTCA Bylaws Template expected to be shared with Council in the very near future.
- Resolved 4 (dues alignment) was perceived as needing further exploration; see Action Item 2.

The ALA Constitution and Bylaws Committee recommends the following to advance the will of ALA Council as expressed in 2021 CD #46.1 Item 2.

25.1: Action Item 1 - re: 2021 CD #46.1 Item 2 Resolved 2 (RT membership)

Motion:

Move to update ALA Bylaws Article VII, Section 1 as follows:

- a) The Council may authorize the organization as a Round Table of any group of not less than 150 members of the Association who are interested in the same field of librarianship not within the scope of any division, upon petition of such group which shall include a statement of purpose.

- b) Each Round Table shall maintain a three-year rolling average membership of at least 150 Round Table members, which is calculated at the end of the ALA fiscal year. Should this Round Table membership count fall below 150, the Committee on Organization shall present that Round Table with an option to convert to a Membership Interest Group, merge with another Round Table, or be discontinued. Based on the affected Round Table's determined action, COO will bring the action to Council for a vote.
- c) The Council may discontinue a Round Table when, in the opinion of the Council, the usefulness of that Round Table has ceased.
- d) A Round Table that is entitled to a Councilor and is going through the process of discontinuance is entitled to Council representation until it is officially discontinued.

25.2: Action Item 2 - re: 2021 CD #46.1 Item 2 Resolved 4 (RT dues)

Background:

C&B Discussions related to Resolved clause 4 included observations about possible lack of clarity around which organizational unit(s) set membership dues. It was observed that there are almost 30 ALA Unit-level entities that are charged with setting membership dues for their various subsets of ALA members.

Relevant portions of the ALA Constitution and Bylaws are listed for background:

- ALA Constitution Article III (Membership) Section 1
 - “Any person, library, or other organization [pays dues as specified in] the Bylaws”
- ALA Bylaws Article I (Membership) Section 2
 - “Dues for personal members shall be set by the Executive Board with approval by a vote of the Council and subject to a mail vote of the personal members”
 - “Dues for Chapter Members, Organization Members, and Corporate Members shall be set by Council upon recommendation of the Executive Board”
- ALA Bylaws Article VI (Divisions) Section 6
 - “Each division shall establish annual dues”
- ALA Bylaws Article VII (Round Tables) Section 3
 - “Round tables may charge annual dues...”
- It was also noted that the ALA Membership Committee charge includes recommending membership dues (to the Executive Board (EB) for personal membership dues and to Council for all other ALA membership category dues)

This discussion also suggested that, if this review of dues structures exclusively pertains to the directive for setting Round Table dues, then representatives from the Round Table Coordinating Assembly (RTCA) could be tasked with deeper investigation of the Forward Together Financial Analysis WG (FTFAWG) report and related discussions, to offer suggestions for an updated model for Round Table dues structures. It was also observed that standardization and reduction of dues-setting authority would reduce complexity and would be a good topic for discussions and recommendations by the TAG Task Force.

Options for consolidating dues structures and rates could include: adding Round Table dues options to the Bylaws-defined process for personal members, discussion among RTCA members to further develop new structures and rates, assigning ownership of dues structure and rate development to an existing group that has this in their charge, such as the ALA Membership Committee, or others.

Motion:

Move that, under existing ALA bylaws the ALA Membership Committee, through collaboration with and input from the Round Table Coordinating Assembly (RTCA), shall recommend an association-wide Round Table dues structure for subsequent ALA Executive Board approval, and for vote by Council no later than the 2023 LibLearnX conference, and subject to a Spring 2023 mail vote of ALA membership.

Further background documentation:

CD#46.1 in full:

https://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2046.1%20FTRWG%20Resolutions%20to%20Council_FINAL.pdf

ALA Bylaws in full:

<https://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/bylaws>

Excerpt from 2021 CD #46.1 Item 2

ITEM #2

ROUNDTABLES

Resolution on ALA Roundtables

Whereas Round Tables are membership units established to promote a field of librarianship not within the scope of any single division;

Whereas Round Tables cannot create ALA policies or speak on behalf of the Association;

Whereas Round Tables may recommend policy and action to other units;

Whereas members of ALA may join Round Tables by payment of the specified dues; and

Whereas Round Tables improve the vitality of ALA and are often the entry point to ALA engagement, now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. affirms Round Tables are a vital part of the ALA structure;
2. requires Round Tables to maintain a minimum of 150 members. A Round Table unable to meet the minimum membership within one year may become an Interest Group, join with another roundtable, or disband;
3. requires that all Round Tables adhere to a common template of core Bylaws while maintaining the flexibility of their own operating principles; and
4. requires that all Round Tables align with nominal, annual membership dues to be recommended by the Round Table Coordinating Assembly;

Excerpt from current ALA Bylaws

Article VII. Round Tables

Section 1. The Council may establish round tables under the following conditions:

- a) The Council may authorize the organization as a round table of any group of not less than 100 members of the Association who are interested in the same field of librarianship not within the scope of any division, upon petition of such group which shall include a statement of purpose.
- b) The Council may discontinue a round table when, in the opinion of the Council, the usefulness of that round table has ceased.
- c) A roundtable that is entitled to a councilor and is going through the process of discontinuance is entitled to council representation until it is officially discontinued.

Finally, we wish to thank all of our colleagues throughout the association who have counseled us and informed our robust conversations. We value and appreciate your insights.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike L. Marlin, Chair

Michael Cerbo

Aaron W. Dobbs

Ed Garcia

H J. Pedelty

Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada (Executive Board Liaison)

Sheryl Reyes (Director, Office of ALA Governance, Staff Liaison)

Mary Rzepczynski

Cara B. Stone

Vivaldi (Guide Dog Extraordinaire, Canine Librarian)