



## Empowering libraries through technology

The Library and Information  
Technology Association

### LITA Annual Report 2020

Submitted June 7, 2020

#### President's Message

The spring of 2020 is bringing changes for LITA, our profession, and the world. In the midst of these changes, some LITA activities are continuing as they normally do, other efforts have been redirected or transformed, and some have been put on hold until we launch [\*Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures\*](#) in the fall.

As LITA celebrated its 50th anniversary supporting IT workers in libraries in 2017, concerns about our sustainability, especially the budget, were already prompting thoughts of reinvention. This led to discussions with our fellow small divisions ALCTS and LLAMA, which eventually took the form of planning for a merger. In the past two years, much of our members' creative energy and volunteer effort have been poured into designing and advocating for this new division, which was approved by a member vote in April 2020. We close out this year—the final full year of LITA—by actively transitioning our operations, staffing, and activities into Core.

During this year, we have added new staff and board members and started to work even more closely with the boards and staff of our sibling divisions which will become Core. Meanwhile, LITA members have been making extraordinary contributions at their home libraries to reinvent our services during COVID-19. We have refocused our attention on our values and what members most need from their association. Members have a lot to be proud of in this transitional year, but what's even more important is what will be built on this foundation in the future.

## Core vote

Members of ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA voted overwhelmingly to dissolve our current divisions and form Core. The “yes” votes were 91%, 96%, 96% respectively—a tribute to the groundwork done by member volunteers over several years.

A number of different committees were convened over the past several years; the most active this year have been the Presidents Elect (Christopher Cronin for ALCTS, Evviva Weinraub for LITA, and Tyler Dzuba for LLAMA) and our Communications Working Group, which did an extraordinary job of reaching out to members to address their questions and concerns. We should also recognize our members generally for having the vision and trust to engage in the process and vote yes even when some of the details were intentionally set aside for the future Core governance group.

Covering the transitional period from Spring 2020 through Core’s formal launch in September, a Core Transition Committee—consisting of the nine presidents (past, current, elect) of the three divisions and the staff—is working to marshal the resources of the three divisions in preparation for handing them over to the new leadership of Core. Working groups composed of members, staff, and board members are documenting the major activity areas like conference events, publications, and continuing education. New nominating and communications committees have been charged to work over the transitional period.

## Elections and New Staff

Chrishelle Thomas joined LITA this year as our Membership and Marketing Manager, following the retirement of Mark Beatty. She came to us from C200, a nonprofit that connects women from the highest levels of successful public and private companies, where she was the Member Services and Programs Administrator. Chrishelle jumped in right away, publicizing our programs, managing our social media, and joining Jenny Levine and the ALCTS and LLAMA staff in preparing to work together in Core.

Because of the Core vote, LITA did not hold its usual election this year. Our President Elect, Evviva Weinraub, will be one of the candidates for Core President 2020-21. The new nominating committee will present a slate of candidates for Core offices in 2021-22. Existing LITA board members will have roles on the Core board, and LITA’s Councillor, Jodie Gambill, will become Core’s Councillor.

## Awards, Leaders, and Scholars

The 2020 Frederick G. Kilgour Award for Research in Library and Information Technology recipient is **Dr. Jian Qin**, a Professor and Director at the iSchool, Syracuse University. Dr. Qin's recent research projects include metadata modeling for gravitational wave research data management and big metadata analytics using GenBank metadata records for DNA sequences, both with funding from NSF. She is co-author of the book *Metadata*.

The recipient of the 2020 Student Writing Award sponsored by Ex Libris Group and the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA) is **Samantha Grabus**. Her winning paper is titled "Evaluating the Impact of the Long S upon 18th-Century Encyclopedia Britannica Automatic Subject Metadata Generation Results," which will be published in the September 2020 issue of *Information Technology and Libraries* (ITAL)

**Allison Macrina** is the 2020 recipient of the LITA/Library Hi-Tech Award. She led the Tor Relay Initiative in New Hampshire, is the founder and executive director of the Library Freedom Project, and has written and taught extensively in the areas of digital privacy, surveillance, and user anonymity in the context of libraries and librarianship.

The LITA Committee Recognizing Excellence in Children's and Young Adult Science Fiction presented the 2020 Excellence in Children's and Young Adult Science Fiction Notable Lists, with over 30 annotated recommendations of picture books, middle grade, and young adult titles.

Participating in the ALA Spectrum Scholars program with the sponsorship of LITA and OCLC is **Hebah Emara**, a second year distance student at the University of Missouri – Columbia School of Information Science and Learning Technologies MLIS program.

The LITA Emerging Leaders team for 2020 includes two LITA-sponsored members, **Kelsey Flynn** and **Paige Walker**, along with **Kristen Cooper**, **Tonya Ferrell**, **Laura Mendez**, and **Tonya Ryals**. The LITA Board as well as the boards of ALCTS and LLAMA look forward to hearing soon about their work on how to make a division fiscally and environmentally sustainable.

## Events

Since last summer's Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, LITA members have participated in a regular in-person event—Midwinter in Philadelphia—and a planned virtual event—the ALCTS/LITA/LLAMA Exchange. Due to covid-19, ALA's Annual Meeting for 2020 has been converted to a virtual event, with LITA (and its sibling

divisions) offering an abbreviated slate of events. The Core Forum, originally scheduled for November in Baltimore, has also been converted to a virtual event, with our visit to Baltimore rescheduled for 2021.

**Midwinter** in Philadelphia featured multiple events with ALCTS and LLAMA members, including an open joint board meeting at which leaders and members worked in small groups on visioning for the new division and brainstorming signature activities for Core's [six sections](#). The LITA Membership Development committee sponsored a very well-attended and festive joint happy hour which was an informal opportunity for members of all three divisions to get to know each other. While LITA had made the decision not to hold committee meetings in favor of holding them online, several programs were held, including the always-popular Top Tech Trends panel and a Maker Technology Interest Group tour of a local makerspace.

The **Exchange**, keynoted by Emily Drabinski and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, was hailed as a success with great content and a useful format that came just at the right time, as many members settled into working from home during COVID-19 shutdowns. This event built on ALCTS's experience running virtual events, with a planning committee composed of members of all three divisions.

In June, LITA members will attend the first ALA **Virtual** conference, replacing the planned Annual Meeting in Chicago. This event will feature LITA's Top Tech Trends panel on Wednesday, June 24th at 1:30pm Central. Complimentary registration for the entire event is available to ALA members who have recently been furloughed, laid off, or are experiencing a reduction of paid work hours.

In November, Core will host its first [Core Forum](#). Originally intended to follow the model of past LITA Forums, this event is now being reimaged to engage attendees remotely. With Planning Committee Chair Berika Williams, members of all three divisions are working on developing content, the format, and social events. This year will be different but the event will offer the learning and networking that members expect from Forum.

LITA was a forerunner in scaling back our Midwinter activities, which we did in the interest of emphasizing full participation for members who aren't able to attend two conferences per year. For 2021, Core is not planning any formal meetings or programs for the Midwinter meeting in Indianapolis. The 2021 Annual Meeting is already scheduled to be in Chicago again, and the in-person Forum is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2021 in Baltimore. I'm hopeful we will get to return to these great cities, just a year later than planned.

## Publications and Continuing Education

This year, LITA has once again offered a variety of webinars and online courses to help members learn about new concepts and best practices. Topics have included surveillance capitalism in online learning platforms that libraries may present to users, bibliometrics, library UX, algorithmic bias and information literacy, and even how to protect library data when working from home.

[ITAL](#) has been publishing some wonderful articles this year, including recent issues with a particular emphasis on usability methods and results for different library tools, and on virtual/augmented reality in libraries. Ken Varnum has been reappointed for a second term as ITAL editor..

Marta Deyrup was also appointed to another term as Publications Acquisitions Editor to help transition our publishing program to Core. Titles she brought to [publication this year](#) include *Change Management for Library Technologists*, *Casting Light on the Dark Web: A Guide for Safe Exploration*, *Makerspace and Collaborative Technologies*, and *The Dark Side of Our Digital World and What You Can Do about It*.

## ALA Developments

At the 2020 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia, LITA leaders and staff were excited to join an association-wide discussion of the SCOE project and its report, [Forward Together](#), and were very pleased to meet the new ALA Executive Director, Tracie Hall, who made a surprise appearance at several meetings.

While we were at Midwinter, we learned about some financial difficulties at the ALA level which had led to the net asset balances of the divisions being appropriated to cover current expenses. This heightened the urgency of SCOE's efforts to streamline the association but also left LITA in a position where we needed Core to be approved by members, which thankfully has happened.

However, many challenges remain—ALA has scheduled substantial furloughs for all staff in order to complete the 2020-21 budget, while layoffs or furloughs among members will likely exacerbate a downward trend in membership numbers. Some of SCOE's recommendations are relevant to this development, for example, changes to the Executive Board structure and Council that are intended to keep leadership accountable and in touch with members, but with less cost and governance overhead.

The LITA leadership has not only been in favor of making the changes, but consider the Core project to be a model of how to get it done—a view that is widely shared around ALA. LITA and our sibling divisions had to identify the essential elements of

membership and plan how to enhance them in a new governance structure. This is the challenge now facing ALA as a whole under Tracie's leadership. As Core we will continue to actively contribute to the discussion.

I'm proud of the creativity and industry that LITA members have brought to the challenges of this transitional year and am looking forward to Core's upcoming inaugural events, especially our virtual Core Forum. Thank you to LITA's Executive Director, Jenny Levine, for her dedication and vision; to our new Membership and Marketing Manager, Chrishelle Thomas, for her enthusiasm and fresh perspective; and to the boards of all three divisions for their tenacity through the Core project.

Respectfully submitted,  
Emily Morton-Owens  
LITA President 2019-20