ALA Executive Board

TOPIC: Committee on Accreditation (COA) response to the Final Report of the Presidential Task Force on Library Education, as requested in Executive Board Document 2008-2009 EBD#12.30 by motion passed January 24, 2009, "That the ALA Executive Board supports the report of the Presidential Task Force on Library Education and refers recommendations 1-10 to the ALA Committee on Accreditation and requests a response by 2009 Annual Conference."

SUBMITTED BY: Richard E. Rubin, Chair, ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA)

DATE: June 1, 2009

Upon request of the ALA Executive Board and on behalf of the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA), I respectfully submit this response to the 10 recommendations in the Final Report of the Presidential Task Force on Library Education, issued January 13, 2009. The COA continues to consider carefully the report recommendations and their implications for the *Standards for Accreditation*. This response is divided into four sections: Section I. provides a context for considering changes to the Standards; Section II. provides the COA's initial observations on each of the Task Force's recommendations; Section III. offers some concluding remarks; and Section IV. is an Appendix with supplementary information.

I. Context for Considering Changes to the Standards

Both aspects of COA's charge, (1) to be responsible for the execution of the accreditation program of the ALA and (2) to develop and formulate standards of education for library and information studies for the approval of Council (*ALA Handbook of Organization*), are achieved through a consensus-building process involving various communities of

interest, including educators, students, and professionals in library and information studies (Appendix). The first charge informs the second through review and response to reports that include annual statistical reports on such data as enrollment and completion, full-time and part-time faculty; biennial narrative reports that address each standard; special reports that address specific issues needing clarification or areas identified for improvement; and comprehensive reviews conducted at least every seven years which include a visit by an external review panel appointed by COA.

To accomplish the second Committee charge, the standards and procedures are periodically revised and updated as part of the effort to ensure optimal benefit to the profession and the public. [*Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures* (AP3), I.1]

A. Standards Development and Review Process

Throughout the standards-development process, the COA seeks, receives, and uses comments and suggestions from the communities of interest (Appendix) in both the United States and Canada. The standards review process is deliberative, inclusive, and consultative, involving collection of comment from a broad base of stakeholders including, but not limited to, ALA and its units and members; the Canadian Library Association, in particular the Canadian Association for Graduate Education in Library and Information Studies (CAGELIS) and the Canadian Council of Information Studies/Conseil Canadien des Sciences de L'information, the Canadian Association for Information Science (CAIS-ACSI); other library and information studies associations such as SLA, MLA, ARL, ARMA, ALISE and ASIS&T; schools of library and

information studies including faculty, students, administrators, and graduates; employers; the public; and the many individuals who serve on COA External Review Panels. (Appendix)

The recent five-year comprehensive review of the 1992 Standards resulted in ALA Council adoption of a 2008 version of the Standards. The review process included public meetings at ALA, invitations to comment, analysis of comment, and issuance of drafts with change rationales for the multiple discussions that took place with stakeholders.

The responsibilities inherent in the Committee's charge are themselves daunting. Students rely on us to ensure that a program is administered and delivered in a manner that permits them to develop strong professional skills in a timely manner. The program faculty expect formulation and enforcement of appropriate standards of academic performance in terms of teaching, research, and service. Each program relies on the COA to provide consistent standards for assessment that are fairly applied. University administrators expect us to provide an objective assessment of the program and at the same time to understand the particular context in which a particular program resides within a given university.

B. The Role of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and its Relationship to Reviewing Changes in the Standards

The Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) promulgates eligibility criteria and standards that accreditors such as ALA are expected to meet. CHEA is a nonprofit organization. Its members encompass most of the degree granting institutions in the United States. CHEA recognition is limited to accrediting agencies engaged primarily in

the accreditation of programs leading to academic degrees. Since the CHEA membership

and Board are composed of the higher education community of the country, recognition

by CHEA means the endorsement of an agency's work by the nation's higher education

community. Although CHEA recognition is not required, universities are increasingly

reluctant to work with accreditors who have not achieved recognition by CHEA. Review

of the COA for continuing recognition by CHEA begins in 2010 in the context of the

2006 CHEA Eligibility Standards and Recognition Standards.

As the COA responds to the recommendations of the Task Force, two CHEA

Standards are particularly relevant and provide a context for our review. These two

standards when taken together highlight the COA's responsibility for the broadest

consultation.

Eligibility Standard 9G

[that an accrediting body] demonstrates independence from any parent entity, or
sponsoring entity, for the conduct of accreditation activities and determination of
accreditation status.

Eligibility Standard 12E

[that an accrediting body] demonstrates ongoing review of accreditation
practices. Even as higher education institutions and programs undertake ongoing
self-scrutiny to maintain and improve quality, accrediting organizations need
self-scrutiny of their accrediting practices. Such review should also include
examination of the accreditor's impact on institutions and responsiveness to the
broader accreditation and higher education community. To be recognized, the
accrediting organization provides evidence that it sustains ongoing:

1. critical self-review that can further responsiveness,
    flexibility, and accountability when the accrediting organization
    works with institutions, programs, and the public;

2. initiatives that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of
    services to institutions or programs;

3. review of its value to the institution in its entirety and to the higher education community; and

4. review, within its resources, of the impact of its standards and procedures on institutions or programs.

As the parent entity, the ALA of course plays an important role and provides substantive input into the accreditation process. The Task Force recommendations are examples of such input. Nevertheless, the COA as part of its independent function must also ensure that its information gathering, evaluation, assessment and decision-processes also include in a substantial manner other entities that are significant stakeholders affected by the accreditation process. Involvement of such entities is crucial for broad-based and inclusive processes that lead to quality decision making. Failure to involve them limits valuable perspectives and may jeopardize CHEA recognition status.

II. Initial COA observations on the report recommendations

(Some individual recommendations have been grouped together for common discussion.)

<u>General Response</u>

The recommendations of the Task Force vary as to their complexity and impact on the profession and LIS education. The COA therefore intends to solicit the opinions of accreditation stakeholders, including but not limited to appropriate associations, educational units, and individuals from the library and information profession (Appendix) concerning the Task Force recommendations. The COA will employ a variety of communication techniques including solicitation of opinions through electronic as well as other means.

Specific Responses

Task Force Recommendation 1. That the Association adopt the *Core Competences of*

Librarianship...." That document was adopted by Council at the ALA 2009 Midwinter

Conference.

Task Force Recommendation 2. *That the Association incorporate those core competences*
and ALA's Core Values of Librarianship into its Standards for accreditation of master's
programs in library & information studies (see Appendix B – hereafter referred to as
"the standards") together with the recommendations on those standards listed below.

The *Core Competences of Librarianship* and the *Core Values of Librarianship* approved

by the ALA Council represent important contributions to the ongoing discussions of what

constitutes effective professional library and information service.

   The current *Standards* take note of the importance of the use of statements of

knowledge and competencies developed by relevant professional organizations (ALA

being one). For example, the *Standards* state:

> The Office for Accreditation provides educational policy statements from
> relevant professional organizations in the Educational Policy Statements
> area of the website at ala.org/accreditation. Reference to these materials
> by schools as they plan, develop, and evaluate their programs is essential.
> (2008 *Standards,* p. 4)

Similarly, the *Standards* related to curriculum include the observations that curriculum

should "foster development of the competencies necessary for a productive career" (2008

Standards, p. 10). The Standards further note "…learning experiences are built upon a

general foundation of library and information studies. The design of specialized learning

experiences takes into account the statements of knowledge and competencies developed

by relevant professional organization" (2008 Standards, p. 10).

Based on the current Standards, consultation and use of the *Core Competences* would certainly be expected in an accredited program's curriculum development. The COA believes that the question as to whether these particular *Core Competences* and *Core Values* should have a special place in the *Standards* is one that should be addressed by the broader community of stakeholders through our opinion solicitation process.

Task Force Recommendation 3. *That the standards be revised to be written using imperatives and in the active voice— stressing that adherence to them is required for accreditation.*
Task Force Recommendation 4. *That the standards be stated to be prescriptive, not indicative – mandates not suggestions.*

The COA appreciates the desire that standards have a prescriptive and imperative nature and that there should be an expectation that standards should be met. A review of the *Standards* indicates that by and large the standards are prepared in a format that could be considered imperative, and there is already an expectation that standards should be met. The use of the present indicative shows the intent of the standards.

From the perspective of accreditation in general, there are differences of opinion regarding the appropriate nature of standards, how to measure them, and how to evaluate the extent to which standards are met. These differences are found among many accrediting agencies and are not restricted to the field of library and information studies. Regarding the issue of the prescriptiveness of the standards, the COA believes that a decision to change the standards as recommended has substantial, broad-based implications both philosophical and practical which must be assessed further. The opinion-solicitation process adopted by the COA should provide important and useful information before making a determination.

Task Force Recommendation 5. *That the standards use the terms "program" and "school" with exactitude to make it crystal clear that they are concerned only with programs and not with schools, except in areas in which the activities and policies of the program are inextricable from those of the school.*

On review, the COA believes that this matter is stated clearly. For example, the

Standards state "These standards are limited in their application to the assessment of

graduate programs of library and information studies that lead to a master's degree"

(2008 Standards, p. 2). Further clarification is offered on page three "A school's mission

is relevant to master's program review; when the school offers other educational

programs, the contribution of those programs is also relevant."

Nonetheless, the COA will collect comment on this recommendation to determine if

improved wording and additional text is needed.

Task Force Recommendation 6. *That it is made clear to programs seeking accreditation that the Association is not interested in prescribing a "core curriculum," (though it should be clear that the Core Competences are the bedrock of the curricula of accredited programs). Accordingly, the standards should be written to concentrate on the outcomes of the education received in accredited LIS programs and that these outcomes not only be achieved but documented in the accreditation process.*

Task Force Recommendation 10. *That the standards make it inescapably clear that assessment processes must be such as to show that the outcomes dictated by the standards are achieved demonstrably – that is, with sufficient objective evidence to show that those outcomes are achieved by all graduates of the program.*

The COA agrees that programs should not assume that there is a "core curriculum"

established by COA. The standards on curriculum do identify, however, important areas

that should be addressed without prescribing a "core curriculum". The COA is unaware

of a program that believes that a "core curriculum" has been prescribed, but will look into

this matter to make sure that there is no confusion regarding this matter.

There are also several parts of the *Standards* that address the need for clearly

stated objectives and the need for outcomes assessment. Additional emphasis on

outcomes assessment was one of the changes made in the recent set of Standards. Among

the pertinent statements regarding outcome measures are the following:

Standard I.2: "Program objectives are stated in terms of student learning outcomes…"
Standard I.3 "…each program is judged on the degree to which it attains its objectives."
Standard II. 7 "Evaluation of the curriculum includes assessment of students'
achievements and their subsequent accomplishments."
Standard IV .4 "Students receive systematic, multifaceted evaluation of their
achievements."
Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures (*AP3*) II.2 Student Outcomes
AP3 II.2.1 Sources of data for measuring outcomes
AP3 II.6.3 Presenting Evidence
AP3 II.6.5 Evidence for Meeting the Standards for Accreditation

The COA will continue to review the *Standards* and the process to determine if

additional statements are needed to emphasize outcome measures.

Task Force Recommendation 7. *That ALA's accreditation standards prescribe that a
majority of the permanent full-time faculty teaching in the program are grounded in
librarianship by virtue of their educational background, professional experience and/or
record of research and publication.*

Task Force Recommendation 8. *That ALA's accreditation standards prescribe that the
full-time faculty of ALA-accredited programs are sufficient in number and diversity of
specialties to carry out the major share of the teaching, research, and service activities
required for accreditation.*

The COA agrees that each accredited program should possess the faculty with the

appropriate professional experience, background and research record to ensure program

excellence. The issue of full-time to part-time faculty ratios is also a matter of interest to

the COA. The standards regarding faculty state "Full-time faculty members are…

sufficient in number and in diversity of specialties to carry out the major share of the

teaching, research, and service activities required for a program, wherever and however

delivered" (2008 Standards, III.1, p. 11). The desire for a prescriptive approach to

faculty ratios as the solution, however, raises many substantive issues which need to be

analyzed further and by many stakeholders before implementing such a recommendation.

The consultative approach adopted in the opinion-solicitation process should help the

COA obtain the necessary input.

Task Force Recommendation 9. *That ALA's accreditation standards prescribe that temporary and part-time faculty of ALA-accredited programs are appointed to balance and complement the teaching competences of the full-time faculty, not to replace them in their teaching activity.*

The COA agrees that an important use of part-time faculty is to balance and complement

the teaching of full time faculty. This is reflected in the faculty Standard III.1 which

states "Part-time faculty, when appointed, balance and complement the teaching

competencies of the full-time faculty" (2008 Standards, p. 11). The COA will continue to

monitor programs regarding this issue.

III. Conclusion

Alteration of standards is a natural part of the accreditation process. As the field evolves

and the demands of the profession change the required knowledge, skills, and abilities of

its practitioners, it is expected that the standards of accreditation will reflect these

changes. By the same token, academic programs, in order to administer their programs

effectively, must have some consistency of standards so that they can plan and implement their programs effectively over time.

Achieving the optimal balance between that consistency and responsiveness is a challenge, and the process of assessment and revision of standards is necessarily one that requires considerable consultation and reflection and time. Stakeholder groups need time to consider and comment on proposals for revisions, often requiring one or more general (usually annual) meetings.   Degree programs also need time to adjust their planning and work to new standards and requirements; if these adjustments require changes in staffing or services or curricula, those could also take a year or more to plan, design, implement, and assess, especially since often external (i.e., institutional) bodies and approvals can be involved.

These are among the reasons why standards revision has traditionally been a multi-year cyclical process. This can be frustrating to those who might desire more rapid change, but the alternative—in the worst case, could involve several sets of standards simultaneously in effect for different programs. Such a condition would seriously threaten the ability of the COA to meet the responsibilities of its first charge of executing the program of accreditation effectively.

The standards for accreditation provide the common lens through which the COA can view, in a unified way, the many special and unique aspects of each program. COA remains committed to serving all the stakeholders and, through the balancing of their interests, encouraging a vital and fertile ground for professional education.

 The Task Force recommendations raise many important issues. The COA believes the recommendations create an excellent opportunity for an informative

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exchange of various points-of-view. Such exchanges should inform the COA regarding

the strengths, weaknesses and potentialities of new alterations to the *Standards*.

IV. Appendix

Contact:
COA Liaison
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2008-2013 Standards Review Plan
Tentative Timeline

Gathering comment on 2008 *Standards* begins 16 January 2008
Gathering comment via ALA website begins 29 May 2009
Schedule of formal calls for comment on revisions: 15 Dec 2010; 15 Dec 2011

Stakeholder Groups	Correspondence Channels	Conferences/ Meetings	Schedule
Accreditors/Recognizing Agency			
Association for Specialized and Professional Accreditors ASPA	aspa-list@aspa-usa.org		15 Dec 2010 15 Dec 2011
Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions C-RAC	jmorse@msche.org pbento@neasc.org bbrittingham@ neasc.org smanning @hlcommission.org selman@nwccu.org bwheelan@ sacscoc.org bbeno@accjc.org rwolff@ wascsenior.org		15 Dec 2010 15 Dec 2011
Council for Higher Education Accreditation CHEA	chea@chea.org		15 Dec 2010 15 Dec 2011
Associations/Societies			
American Association of Law Libraries AALL	Kate Hagan Executive Director khagan@aall.org	Blog announcement	29 May 2009
American Indian Library Association AILA	carlene_engstrom@skc.edu	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
American Library Association ALA	- Press release to PIO pio@ala.org - Web Editorial Board webeditorialboard@ala.org with request to highlight	COA meeting w/ALA Exec Board at 2009 Midwinter	27 Jan 2009

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Stakeholder Groups	Correspondence Channels	Conferences/ Meetings	Schedule
	- AL Direct - *Prism* - BCALA via **Karolyn.thompson@usm.edu**	COA 2009 Spring Mtg Interim reports from programs	17-19 Apr 2009
	- Committees chairs email list alacomchairs@ala.org via hrdr@ala.org	Conf call w/ALA Exe Bd on TF Report	26 Apr 2009
	- Council & Exec Board via Governance Office JoAnne Kempf - jkempf@ala.org	Blog announcement http://www.oa.ala.org/accreditation/	29 May 2009
	- Divisions, Offices, RTs via unit_managers@ala.org Individual member emails (Sent only upon approval of SAED or ED)	Submit Response to Exec Bd on Task Force Recommendations on Standards	1 Jun 2009
		ALA 2009 Annual	COA program *ALA Accreditation: Employers Speak* Sun 4:00-5:30 PM
		COA 2009 Fall Mtg **Comment Analysis**	20-22 Nov
		ALA 2010	COA program

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		Midwinter	Sun 4:00-5:00 PM
		COA 2010 Spring Mtg	16-18 Apr
		ALA 2010 Annual	COA Open Meeting Sun 4:00-5:00
		COA 2010 Fall Mtg **Comment Analysis Prepare draft revision 1**	19-21 Nov
		Call of comment on draft revision 1	15 Dec 2010
		ALA 2011 Midwinter	COA program Sun 4:00-5:00
		COA 2011 Spring Mtg	15-17 Apr
		ALA 2011 Annual	COA Open Mtg Sun 4:00-5:00
		COA 2011 Fall	19-21 Nov 2011

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Stakeholder Groups	Correspondence Channels	Conferences/ Meetings	Schedule
		Mtg **Comment Analysis Prepare draft revision 2**	
		Call for comment on Draft Revision 2	<mark>15 Dec 2011</mark>
		ALA 2012 Midwinter	COA program Sun 4:00-5:00
		COA 2012 Spring Mtg	13-15 Apr
		ALA 2012 Annual	COA Open Meeting Sunday 4-00 -5:00
		COA 2012 Fall Mtg **Comment Analysis Finalize draft for proposal to ALA Council**	16-18 Nov
		ALA 2013 Midwinter	
American Society for	Richard Hill, Executive Director,	Blog	29 May 2009

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Information Science & Technology ASIS&T	ASIS&T rhill@asis.org	Announcement Board Meetings	
American Theological Library Association (ATLA)	Dennis A. Norlin Executive Director dnorlin@atla.com	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Art Libraries Society of North America (ALSNA)	Tony White Education Liaison antmwhit@indiana.edu	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association	Gerardo "Gary" Colmenar, Executive Director colmenar@library.ucsb.edu	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services	Jody Olivieri President pres@abos-outreach.org	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Association of Independent Info Professionals AIIP	office@aiip.org	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Association of Records Mgrs and Admins ARMA	Marilyn Bier Executive Director hq@arma.org	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Association of Research Libraries ARL	Charles B. Lowry Executive Director clowry@arl.org	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Association for Library and Information Science Educators ALISE	alise@alise.org	Blog Announcement Annual 2010 Annual 2011	29 May 2009

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		Annual 2012 Board Meetings	
Association for Rural and Small Libraries	Hot Topics discussion list http://www.webjunction.org/arsl /resources/discussion/33783192	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Beta Phi Mu	Christie Koontz, Executive Director ckoontz@ci.fsu.edu	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Canadian Association for Graduate Education in LIS CAGELIS	Carolyn Watters President carolyn.watters@dal.ca	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Canadian Association for Information Science ACSI CAIS	Joan Bartlett President joan.bartlett@mcgill.ca	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Canadian Library Association	Kelly Moore Executive Director kmoore@cla.ca	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Catholic Library Association	Jean R. Bostley, SSJ Executive Director cla@cathla.org	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Chinese-American Librarians Association	Haipeng Li Executive Director haipeng.li@oberlin.edu	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Council on Library/Media Technicians	Jackie Hite President jmhite0@dia.mil	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Library Research Service (Denver, CO)	LRS@LRS.org Blog http://www.lrs.org/blog/viewite m.php?post=281	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009

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Medical Library Association	Carla J. Funk Eecutive Director funk@mlahq.org	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Music Library Association	Ruthann B. McTyre President ruthann-mctyre@uiowa.edu	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
National Story Telling Network	Sherry Norfolk Chair shnorfolk@aol.com	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Online Audiovisual Catalogers	Bobby Bothmann President robert.bothmann@mnsu.edu	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Patent and Trademark Depository Library Association	Andrew Wohrley President wohrlaj@auburn.edu	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Proliteracy Worldwide	David C. Harvey President/CEO dharvey@proliteracy.org	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
REFORMA (National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking)	Luis Chaparro National President lchapa13@epcc.edu	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin America Library Materials	Pamela Graham President graham@columbia.edu	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Sociedad de Bibliotecarios de Puerto Rico	María de los Ángeles Lugo President um_mlugo@suagm.edu	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Society of American Archivists SAA	Nancy Beaumont Executive Director	Blog	1 June 2009

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	nbeaumont@archivists.org	Announcement	
Special Libraries Association SLA	Janice R. Lachance Chief Executive Officer janice@sla.org	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Theater Library Association	Kenneth Schlesinger President kenneth.schlesinger@lehman.cuny.edu	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Urban Libraries Council	Rick Ashton Chief Operating Officer rashton@urbanlibraries.org	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
External Reviewers			
	OA email list	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Library & Information Studies Programs			
	OA email list	Blog Announcement	29 May 2009
Public			
	Email public library directors via ALA/PLA list		15 Dec 2010 15 Dec 2011
	PLA E-newsletter to 9,000 PLA members		15 Dec 2010 15 Dec 2011
Students			
LIS Student Associations	Email via LIS programs	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009
Student AL Direct	Christina Coleman ccoleman@ala.org	Blog Announcement	1 June 2009