

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Reauthorizing Libraries Transform

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

Board approval to extend Libraries Transform as ALA's official public awareness campaign through August 31, 2022.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:

Erin Barnhouse, chair, Public Awareness Committee
Stephanie Hlywak, Director, Communications and Marketing Office

CONTACT PERSON:

Stephanie Hlywak, 847-372-7427, shlywak@ala.org

DRAFT OF MOTION:

Resolved, the Libraries Transform public awareness campaign will continue through at least August 31, 2022.

DATE: May 18, 2021

BACKGROUND:

The Libraries Transform campaign has been successful in building a network of library supporters by having a public conversation about today's libraries and the essential role they play in a healthy community. We ask that the ALA Executive Board extends this campaign so that this conversation—and more importantly, the work and support it inspires on behalf of libraries—can continue as we consider what might come next.

ATTACHMENTS:

Formal letter of request attached

May 17, 2021

Dear President Jefferson,

On behalf of the Public Awareness Committee, I am writing to you to recommend the Executive Board of the American Library Association once again extend its commitment to the Libraries Transform campaign. As you know, the campaign launched in October 2015 and in 2017 the Executive Board authorized the program through August 30, 2020. In March 2020, the committee chair asked for and received an extension of Libraries Transform for an additional 12 months, to August 30, 2021.

We are asking today to extend the campaign once more, to August 30, 2022. This will allow the Communications and Marketing Office staff, along with member leaders, the PAC committee members, and others the time necessary to launch a new campaign in its place in coordination with other planned initiatives across the Association.

Since 2015, the Libraries Transform public awareness campaign has endeavored to create a national “brand” for the modern library in all its permutations. Now in its fifth year, the campaign has mobilized library lovers across the world with easy-to-use graphics and messaging for marketing, advocacy, fundraising and more. More than 15,000 libraries and supporters have joined Libraries Transform from all 50 U.S. states as well as international libraries in more than 100 countries.

The campaign’s original goals remain the same:

- Increase AWARENESS of and support for the transforming library
- Shift the PERCEPTION of libraries from “obsolete” or “nice to have” to essential, and
- ENGAGE and energize library professionals and build external advocates to influence local, state and national decision-makers.

Similarly, the key messages remain relevant:

- Libraries transform lives
- Libraries transform communities
- Librarians are passionate advocates for lifelong learning
- Libraries are a smart investment

The Public Awareness Committee believes that extending ALA’s commitment to Libraries Transform is necessary because the campaign ensures there is one clear, energetic voice for the profession, providing library advocates with adaptable tools to showcase for the public the transformative nature of today’s libraries and elevating the critical role libraries play in the digital age.

Additionally, users appreciate our work. A September 2019 survey of Libraries Transform users found that 88% said that they would recommend the program to fellow library advocates. The vast majority of respondents agreed that the Libraries Transform tools (84%) and website (81%) are easy to use. 79% reported that they find the Libraries Transform messaging to be useful in their public awareness and advocacy efforts, and 76% find value in the Libraries Transform newsletter.

Furthermore, Libraries Transform fills a needed gap in library capacity. Few respondents (22%) have dedicated full-time marketing/communications staff working at their libraries. The majority (70%) have

staff who handle communications in addition to other duties, while a small number (8%) have dedicated part-time communications staff.

In closing, the Libraries Transform campaign has been successful in building a network of library supporters having a public conversation about today's libraries and the essential role they play in a healthy community. We ask that the ALA Executive Board extends this campaign so that this conversation—and more importantly, the work and support it inspires on behalf of libraries—can continue as we consider what might come next.

Sincerely,

Erin Barnhouse
Chair, Public Awareness Committee