

Does your Committee need a Community?

an **ALCTS** member's guide to getting started

Developed in response to member requests to facilitate committee work between conferences and meetings, online communities offer all ALA member volunteers virtual workspace. Any ALCTS Committee (discussion group or interest group) may request a community in order to keep in touch and complete work between meetings.

Chores that can be made easier include:

- Posting files for distribution to other members (others can view and edit them).
- Conducting meetings/discussions with the chat feature.
- Using discussion forums for conversation; like electronic mailing lists for individual topics.
- Keeping track of meeting times and locations and project or voting deadlines using the calendar feature.
- Building a links section for referencing documents elsewhere on the Web.

Get Started:

Request a Community for your Group

One person should be designated Community Administrator (CA). This person is usually the chair, but can be any member. The CA will submit the request on behalf of the rest of the committee.

To make the request:

- **Access** <http://communities.ala.org/>
- **Select** "Request a community" from the choices in the Blue bar on the MAIN ALA online communities page.

Fill in the blanks on the page:

• Category	DIVISION-ALCTS
• Community Name	the full name of your committee
• Description	group's charge or other text
• Keywords	to be determined by the group/requester
• User Registration	Private. Most committee work will be done in "private" communities.

Note: Anyone accessing an online community must be an ALA member, unless special permission is obtained from Charles Wilt, ALCTS Executive Director.

Get Training

Thus far, each new community has determined its own training method:

- members sign up individually for a general, scheduled class;
- members determine a time when most can attend a class together to develop and learn within their community;
- AC sets up the community with the trainer separately and then the members train in the community together.

The committee should discuss what arrangement will be best for them and, if necessary, discuss options with ALA's Trainer, Louise Gruenberg (lgruenberg@ala.org) or Christine Taylor (ctaylor@ala.org).

Community Administrators

CAs should attend a 3-hour training session with the chair/president of the group to set up and customize the community. This should be done before the participant session takes place.

All committee members

The entire group will learn the details of the software and their community in a 2-hour training session for participants.

Upcoming Training Sessions

7/19/2006	1 pm CST	Online (web conference)
8/3/2006	9 am CST	Online (web conference)

Participants will receive instructions for LiveMeeting and call-in information at least two days before your session.

To Register

Send an email to lgruenberg@ala.org (cc. ctaylor@ala.org) containing:

Your name:	
Your ALA member no.:	
Group:	ALCTS/Committee Name
ALA Contact:	Christine Taylor x5037
First session choice:	
Second choice	

Online Community FAQs

Q. What are ALA Online Communities?

A. ALA's Online Communities will allow members to work online in virtual space, offering new ways to meet colleagues and to discuss and share information. The development of this application was prompted by member requests to facilitate committee work between conferences and meetings, and a broad group of staff and members have participated in the process of distributing an RFP (Request for Proposal), selecting a vendor, and early phases of testing.

An Online Community is essentially a controlled area of web space in which a group of members can collaborate. The controlled area will have restricted access based on an ALA Web Login and password—the same login and password used to access content on the ALA Web site. We hope this exciting new technology will improve members' ability to do the work of the association between conferences and in-person meetings, and allow them to network with other professionals in an intuitive online environment.

Q. Are ALA Online Communities the same as—or replacing—the ALA Web site?

A. No. The ALA Online Communities will live as a separate entity from the ALA Web site, operating on separate servers and containing distinct information. In time, a search engine will be implemented that will allow members to search both the Web site and the Communities simultaneously, but the applications themselves will remain separate. That said, the two systems will share common login credentials for all members, so that you will not need to learn a new login and password – and if you log on to one system and then try to visit the other, you will not need to log on again.

Q. Will nonmembers be able to access ALA Online Communities?

A. A limited number of nonmembers who are actively serving on official ALA or Division committees will be granted access to the Online Communities. By and large, however, ALA Online Communities will be a benefit of membership.

Q. How are Communities formed?

- A.** There are three ways to form an Online Community.
1. From an official ALA or Division Committee. If your committee would like to participate, please let your staff liaison know, and s/he will be sure to make the appropriate arrangements for an online community to be formed.
 2. From a group of members in a specific Division, Round Table, or Section. If you would like an entire division section or Round Table to form a community, please contact someone on staff for your division or for the ALA office that handles your round table.
 3. Based on a request from a member. If you want to form a community regarding a special interest, activity, or subject area not covered by a particular ALA committee or Round Table, you can request the creation of a brand new community by clicking on the "Request a Community" link. You can specify an area of ALA which you would like to sponsor your new community, and staff from that unit will receive and review your request.

Q. Will this replace the electronic discussion list that my committee already uses?

A. Yes and no. If your committee chooses to join the Online Communities, your discussion list will be converted to Discussion Forums within the Communities system. Your archives will move as well. You can choose to maintain both an electronic list and a Community if you like; this is up to the discretion of each committee.

Each of these ALCTS groups currently has its own Online Community:

Acquisitions Section Publications Committee (private)
ALCTS Board of Directors (private)
CCDA (private)
CETRC Mentoring Subcommittee (private)
Evolving Technologies TF (private)
Membership Committee (private)
Planning Committee (private)
Publications Committee (private)
Web Site Redesign TF (private)