

American Librarian Association

Committee Chair Handbook

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Introduction

The Committee Chair Handbook has been produced in response to association leaders' requests to establish a document that defines the roles, responsibilities and division of labor between the ALA committee chair and the staff liaison. Additionally the handbook content is intended to simplify and expedite the work of the committee.

Specifically, this Handbook aims to:

- a) differentiate those committee functions that are member driven and those that staff supported
- b) describe the participation of committees in ALA governance and policy
- c) outline the role of the committee chair
- d) outline the role of the staff liaison

Descriptions of individual committees – their charge, history, and roster of current members – can be found on the ALA website at

<http://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/committees/committees.htm>

*Compiled by the ALA Orientation, Training and Leadership
Development Committee*

ALA Committees

ALA committees are established to carry out the work of the Association. Members are appointed by the president-elect of the Association for two year terms. The members of an ALA committee are responsible for carrying out the work of the committee. The chair of the committee coordinates with the staff liaison to ensure that the committee work is done. The staff liaison acts as a facilitator to ensure that information flows between the members and the appropriate in-house unit.

Committee Appointments

Appointments are made by the president-elect of the Association. These appointments are staggered and take effect after the Annual Conference. Appointments are for two year periods. Persons may be appointed for a second term, but no member may serve for more than four consecutive years on a committee.

Policies Governing ALA Committee Activities

Role

Committees may conduct continuing education activities; study and discuss topics of concern; issue publications (with the advice, assistance and approval of the ALA Publishing Committee); conduct projects and programs in the areas of the committee's purposes; and recommend activities and policies to units of the Association, including Council.

Policy

Three bodies – the ALA membership, ALA Council, and the divisions (within their respective areas of responsibility) have the authority to act for ALA in matters of policy. Committee chairs are not authorized to speak for the Association.

Finances

The budgeting process constitutes the authorization of the committee to incur expenses.

Contracts, grant agreements, project proposals, and similar financial documents must be signed by the ALA Executive Director or his/her authorized representative. This includes events at ALA conferences and meetings. Committee chairs and members may not commit the Association financially or contractually. Fund-raising solicitations follow the routine clearance process used by all units of the Association. Acceptance of unsolicited funds must be authorized by the ALA Executive Director or his/her designated representative to ensure that the terms and conditions are consistent with ALA policies.

ALA Services to Committees

ALA provides certain support services to committees, including staff liaison and related staff services; conference services; public information services; and archiving of records.

Committees will be charged (at the rate used for all ALA units) for data processing, reproduction, mailings (postage), telephone and other items for which there are normally inter-unit charges.

Participation in ALA Governance

Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC) (*standing committee, Council*)

BARC recommends approval of committee budgets (actually the committee budgetary ceiling) to the ALA Executive Board.

Annually (at the beginning of the Midwinter Meeting, usually on Friday morning) BARC presents a "Financial Planning Seminar" for committee chairs and division leaders. Topics addressed range from the basics – such as the interpretation of budget performance reports -- to the advanced -- such as the establishment of endowments. BARC invites member leaders to this seminar as an orientation to ALA financial procedures.

Planning and Budget Assembly (*advisory to BARC and Planning*)

The Planning and Budget Assembly assists the ALA Executive Board and the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC). The Assembly consists of one representative of each division, ALA committee, round table, and five councilors-at-large and five councilors from chapters. The representatives of the divisions, committees, and round tables are designated annually by each group. The duties of the Planning and Budget Assembly are to review the year-end financial results, to study the budget and planning documents submitted by the ALA Executive Board, raise questions concerning them, and offer suggestions to the ALA Executive Board and Budget Analysis and Review Committee.

Other ALA Committee/Round Table Relationships

ALA committees, individually or collectively, may appoint liaisons to other committees and/or roundtables.

The Committee Chair

The committee chair is appointed by the ALA president-elect, for a one or two year term.

Duties of the Chair

- Support and understand the protocol of conducting business with the committee and ALA
- Support and understand the role of the staff liaison
- Prepare and distribute notice of the committee meetings and agendas to committee members in advance of the meeting
- Preside at all committee meetings
- Assign duties to committee members and monitor the progress of those assignments
- **Establish subcommittees as needed to carry out the work of the committee**
- Conduct regular **online** communications with committee members ~~by way of electronic discussion lists~~ to ensure that committee assignments are being carried out and that the work of the committee is moving ahead between committee meetings
- **Oversee committee website and coordinate content of website**
- Recommend names of persons who should be reappointed for a second two year term on the committee
- Report on the committee's activities, as required

Staff Liaison

The Liaison is an appointed member of the ALA staff who responds to the needs of the committee within the limits of time and other responsibilities.

Duties of the Liaison

- Serve as a resource to the committee. (Too large a staff role may reduce the motivation of committee members; too small a role may result in the committee drifting aimlessly and operating ineffectively.)
- Attend committee meetings
- Become thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the committee's work and the Association policies related to committee work
- Answer questions, offer suggestions, and raise issues
- Provide administrative support such as authorizing payment of bills, identifying members, making arrangements for programs including food and equipment setups, and tracking budget expenditures.
- Serve as a gatekeeper for communication between the committee and ALA.
- Complete Meeting Request Forms and submit all requests to Conference Services
Develop and maintain the committee's website and listserv or any other online communication tools used by the committee

Committee Chair Responsibilities Related to Awards

- Call meetings of the committee during the Midwinter Meeting and the Annual Conference, as well as any other meetings that may be needed throughout the year. Meetings during the Midwinter Meeting are the principal business meetings of the year when, for example, proposals for new awards are considered, reviews of existing awards are presented, and the discontinuance of current awards are recommended. Plans for the presentation of awards during the Annual Conference are discussed at these meetings. A meeting should be scheduled in advance of at least one Council meeting, in order that appropriate recommendations might be made to Council during Midwinter.
- Appoint, prior to Annual Conference, juries for all awards administered by the committee. Suggestions should be requested from the current jury chairs regarding potential members to serve as chairs and members of the next year's jury. Suggestions for jury appointments may be requested from division presidents and units within ALA, state agencies and associations, Awards committee members, headquarters staff, and the association membership, at large. In most cases, it is appropriate to seek a representation of people from different types of libraries; in some cases, the specifics of the award require designated representation.
- Invite outgoing jury chairs to the orientation meeting at Annual Conference to allow for general discussion of jury responsibilities and discuss particulars of the various awards, including PR activities. Pertinent records and information should be given to the staff liaison at this time.
- Present matters concerning awards to Council, as necessary, for action or information.

Chart of Responsibilities

Task	Committee Chair	Staff Liaison
Guide CC= Committee Chair SL= Staff Liaison		
Agendas	Prepare agenda and forward to SL	Assist with duplication and distribution of agenda as requested
Appointments	Committee appointments are made by the ALA president-elect. Appointments are staggered and are effective after the annual conference.	Receive list of committee members Send updated list to Membership Services.
Awards/Honors/Scholarships	Appoint award committee for award selection	Prepare publicity announcing nominations & winners. Provide award committee chair with copies of applications.
Budget	Prepare annual budget w/plan of action, budget notes, and actual figures.	
Electronic Information	Coordinate the committee's website and online communication tools	Develop and maintain the committee's website and listserv or any other online communication tools used by the committee; ensure appropriate links on ALA website
Finances	Forward all bills to SL with authorization and proper documentation	Authorize payment of committee bills
Handbook of Organization (ALA)		Complete and submit handbook copy to appropriate office
Meeting Reports	Record or appoint a record keeper to prepare meeting report and forward to SL	Assist with duplication and distribution of meeting reports as requested
Programs	Delegate or complete midwinter and annual conference program forms, meeting room requests and forward to SL	Forward all conference program forms to Conference Services Make meeting arrangements for food, etc. within budget
Publications/Membership Promotions	Work with SL to develop committee brochures as needed	Provide headquarters library with copies of all publications and promotions
Roster	Work with SL to ensure accuracy of rosters	Receive committee rosters from Membership Services Submit completed rosters to Membership Services

CALENDAR Midwinter – June

Guide CC= Committee Chair SL= Staff Liaison	Midwinter	February	March	April	May/June
Agendas/Meeting Reports	CC-Records or appoints a record keeper to prepare meeting		CC-Prepares & distributes meeting report		CC-Prepares & distributes agenda
Appointments/Roster/Handbook					
Awards/Honors/Scholarships		CC-Selects award winner for current year	CC-Mails notification letters to winner and applicants and prepares citation	SL-Prepares publicity for award winner	SL-Prepares check request for award recipient (if applicable)
Budget/Finances SL-Sends monthly budget performance printouts to CC	CC-Approves preliminary budget		SL-Submits completed budget to Finance Unit		
Programs	CC-Completes & forwards annual preliminary program forms to SL SL-Submits annual preliminary program forms to Conference Services		CC-Completes & forwards final annual program forms to SL SL-Submits final annual program forms to Conference Services		CC-Receives annual program room assignments from Conference Services

Annual – December

Guide CC= Committee Chair SL= Staff Liaison	Annual	July	August	September	October/ November	December
Agendas/Meeting Reports	CC-Records or appoints a record keeper to prepare written report		CC-Prepares & distributes meeting report			SL-Prepares & distributes agenda for Midwinter meeting
Appointments/Roster/Handbook	Committee appointments are effective after the Annual Conference.		SL-Receives handbook copy from handbook editor SL-Submits updated handbook copy to editor			
Awards/Honors/Scholarships		CC-Appoints members to award committees	SL/CC-Updates all award applications & nomination forms SL/CC-Prepares publicity for award nominations	SL-Collects & maintains nominations & applications		SL-Mails applications to committee
Budget/Finances	SL-Receives preliminary budget instructions from accounting					
Programs			CC-Receives forms & basic midwinter schedule	CC-Receives basic annual schedule, preliminary program form & space request SL-Submits midwinter meeting space request forms for programs to Conference Services by deadline		SL-Submits annual meeting space request forms for meetings to Conference Services by deadline

