

## American Libraries Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 7-16-2020

Attendees: Rachel Wykle, Sigrid Kelsey, Crystal C., Helen, Susan, Lori Bryan, Jason Alston

Staff: Sanhita SinhaRoy, Carrie Smith, Terra Dankowski, Phil Morehart, Becky Lomax, Amy Carlton,

Meeting Start at 1 p.m. CDT

Agenda:

- I. Welcome and introduction by Chair Susan Polos
- II. Executive Board report by Maria McCauley (optional)
- III. *American Libraries* Magazine
- IV. Americanlibrariesmagazine.org and AL Direct
- V. American Libraries *Dewey Decibel*
- VI. FY20 Finance Report and Strategic Plan Updates
- VII. New business, hot topics, miscellaneous

1. Welcome/agenda/minutes

May minutes approved.

2. ALA Executive Board Liaison report

Talking points were posted to Connect. Maria was unable to attend.

3. *American Libraries* Magazine

Committee members shared positive comments on the copyright and sanitizing collections stories. Amy shared that the online version of the sanitizing story is our most-read article ever.

Terra asked whether committee members could tell that the issue was completed while the entire staff was working from home, and members said they could not. She also noted that we have been repurposing and repackaging content, including publishing trends from the June issue online before print. She highlighted upcoming features, including the Library Design Showcase in September/October, the pandemic's influence on library design, policing and police divestment, libraries hosting *Dungeons & Dragons* games, digitizing COVID-19 history, and teen activism.

Sanhita noted that the Bookend has become more difficult since coronavirus risk is keeping us from hiring photographers, and she solicited suggestions for future Bookends.

Helen suggested stories on online learning privacy and the digital divide. Susan suggested a story on public and school library partnerships.

4. Americanlibrariesmagazine.org and AL Direct

Several committee members noted that they'd followed ALA Virtual through coverage in the Daily Scoop because they were unable to attend the virtual conference.

Sanhita solicited feedback on the AL Direct redesign, which launched in early July. Members had positive comments.

Amy gave an update on AL Online. Our website traffic this year has increased by almost 50%. All the COVID stories posted online—55 so far—have been incredibly popular. The website redesign is on hold, but we get about two hours a month of retainer time each month from our web vendor, which can be used to make aesthetic and functional improvements if needed. Our goal every year is 200 original stories on the website. As of mid-July, we posted 246, including coverage of the Virtual Event.

Crystal asked what determines whether something goes in Latest Library Links vs. getting coverage. Amy clarified that Links is almost always stuff that's covered in other papers. It's breaking news/industry news. But we do draw from Links for story ideas for both online and print, so if news items come up a couple of times, it could be a trend or something we investigate further.

#### 5. American Libraries *Dewey Decibel*

Phil told committee members the June podcast episode on COVID is among our best-performing, bringing in a lot of new listeners. Overall listenership has gone up in recent months. In the past few weeks we've had almost 3,000 listens. Since *Midwinter*: We've done several bonus episodes, with Tracie Hall, an interview with Wes Moore, and a sponsored episode with Gale on its women's history archive. Coming up, we have a sustainability episode, architecture and design, small and rural libraries, and Halloween.

Sanhita mentioned that we are exploring a new name for the podcast and asked for name suggestions.

#### 6. FY20 Finance Report and Strategic Plan Updates

Sanhita noted that advertisers have become very reluctant to advertise. Many vendors are going through their own furloughs and layoffs. Lagging sales for our June print issue really hurt us—that's usually our biggest gross advertising sales for print, but because there was no Annual Conference, we didn't have as many advertisers. Digital ad sales have helped to a certain extent. We are in a partnership with ACRL on JobLIST, and April and May were some of the slowest months in recent years. There has been a slight uptick, but we're more than 20% behind on revenue right now. It's completely market-dependent, so that's hurt us significantly. Part of our charge is to look for new opportunities, which we continue to do.

Susan asked whether ALA staff will be working from home for the foreseeable future.

Sanhita shared that the tentative plan now is that we'll go back September 8. It'll be a staggered return on two teams. You work four days, and then from home for 10 days.

Helen asked about upcoming furloughs.

Sanhita noted that ALA staff will be furloughed for six total weeks, scheduled between this August and August 2021. The first furlough weeks will be in August, then October, December, and three more next calendar year. Each are a week at a time.

#### 7. New business, hot topics, miscellaneous.

Sigrid suggested a story on how library names fit with design. Her library just removed its name because it was named for a segregationist.

#### 8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:55.