

American Libraries Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 1-25-2020

Attendees: Helen Adams, Sigrid Kelsey, Crystal Chen

Staff: Sanhita SinhaRoy, Amy Carlton, Phil Morehart, Rebecca Lomax, Terra Dankowksi, Carrie Smith, Mary Mackay

Meeting Start at 1 p.m. EST

Agenda:

1:00	Welcome	Helen Adams
	1. Introductions	
	2. Approve Minutes from November 2019 Conference Call	
	3. Review Agenda	
1:05	ALA Executive Board liaison report (optional)	Maria McCauley
1:10	American Libraries Magazine	Terra, managing editor
	1. Committee Comments on Jan/Feb 2020 Issue	
	2. Highlights, Award Applications, Upcoming Stories	
1:20	Americanlibrariesmagazine.org and AL Direct	Amy, senior editor
1:30	American Libraries Dewey Decibel	Phil, senior editor
1:40	FY20 Finance Report and Strategic Plan Updates	Sanhita
1:50	Hot Topics, Miscellaneous	
2:00	Adjournment	

1. Welcome

November minutes approved

2. ALA Executive Board Liaison report

Posted to Connect

3. American Libraries Magazine

Committee members had positive comments for the Year in Review, Uncovering the Past, Referenda Roundup, and Midwinter preview features.

Terra highlighted that we've been doing more content packages like the November/December Democracy in Action package. We are working on a package about the Census in March/April and are aiming to have a larger design package in September/October this year. The May issue will again include Emerging Leaders and the Library Systems Report. And in June, we'll focus on social issues including the opioid crisis and profile small and rural librarians.

Sanhita suggested that members note throughout the year articles, episodes, and designs they like for the next round of awards submissions requests.

4. Americanlibraries.org and AL Direct

Amy noted that website traffic has been growing steadily. Six of the 10 best-performing stories since July have been online only, including breaking-news stories like the OverDrive acquisition. Social media is still growing as well. We are putting together RFPs for a future website redesign to make the site look better, work better, and be more accessible. The last redesign was about five years ago. Sanhita noted that the top links from AL Direct are in the report. George is working in Chicago editing conference stories.

5. Dewey Decibel

Phil shared that the podcast has continued to grow in listenership. The PopTop Stage live taping did well, as did our Halloween episode. The January episode, a guide to Philadelphia, had more than 1,300 listens in just a couple of weeks. Conference Services put a link on the conference page, which helped its reach.

We also have some new and returning sponsors this year and are rolling out sponsored episodes where we do a short, 10-minute interview with vendors, thought leaders, etc., modeled on a *Booklist* format. We're giving ourselves flexibility in doing some non-sponsored bonus episodes, including an interview with Tracy Hall, which will go live on her first day as executive director. Another live taping at Annual is in the works, and the theme is librarians using hip-hop as literature.

Phil acknowledged the debate around the Dewey name, particularly the question of whether American Libraries will change the name because of Melvil Dewey's past. We've taken a position thus far that acknowledges Dewey's past and notes that the naming source is the classification system, not the man, and prepared a list of talking points that are on Connect. Crystal shared that she found the guide to Philly super helpful and suggested looking to other podcasts for possible guest appearances. She also noted that she doesn't like the Dewey name, and explained that she finds the cataloging system problematic as well, particularly in the ways that it handles religion, slavery, and other topics. Sigrid also noted that she was in favor of changing the name.

6. FY20 Finance Report and Strategic Plan Updates

Sanhita explained the FY21–23 publishing department business plan. For AL, a lot will be similar to the FY18–20 plan. Our two objectives are content and collaboration, and revenue and advertising. To move forward with that, we're doing some engagement measurements. In addition to metrics, we plan to do another reader survey in FY21, and we'd appreciate any suggestions on that. We also have a liaison program where each editor/staff member is a point of contact for several divisions and offices in ALA, trying to make internal connections to help boost content and collaboration. In terms of revenue, we've tried to build on vendor relationships over the past few years. Online revenue has generally lagged, but this year we've already tripled our budget. We did start using our own house ads on the website to spotlight available ad space. We're partnering with *Booklist* for our new ad management and hosting platform, which gives us some new abilities like video ads. Other areas of advertising have been a challenge. Last year we did well with eblasts/Special Deliveries, and this year it's lagging. AL Direct has been struggling a little with advertising as well. JobLIST, which we work with ACRL on, has been slow. It's been chalked up to market forces that we can't control, so we'll need to bring up revenue in other ways, possibly through podcast special episodes, AL Direct takeovers, etc.

7. Hot topics, misc.

Helen suggested stories on what role libraries have in protecting scientific research (holding archives, etc.) and what role libraries have in climate change.

Crystal suggested looking at how libraries balance equity measures when asked to step in where government is failing in providing social services.

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:04 p.m.