

**Committee on Library Advocacy**  
2019 Midwinter Meetings  
Saturday, January 26<sup>th</sup>  
8:30 – 10:00 AM  
Washington State Convention Center  
Meeting Minutes

*In attendance: Jeremy Johannesen, Chair, Committee on Library Advocacy; Rebecca Smith Aldrich, Mid-Hudson Library System; Justin De La Cruz, Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library; Sara Kelly Johns, AASL; Maria McCauley, Executive Board Liaison; Cynthia Robinson, Illinois Library Association; Dave Schroeder, Kenton County Public Library; Ma'Lis Wendt, Retired*

*Liaisons: Rob Banks, Committee on Legislation; Cindy Czesak, Chapter Relations Committee; Autumn Faulkner, Association for Library Collections and Technical Services; Lacy Wolfe, Public Awareness Committee; Joseph Thompson, Reference and User Services Association; Vivian Wynn, Retired Members Round Table*

*Office for Library Advocacy Staff Liaisons: Marci Merola, Director, ALA Office for Library Advocacy (OLA); Megan Cusick, Grassroots Specialist, OLA; Joaquin Falcon, Communications Specialist, OLA*

*ALA Staff Liaisons: Mariel Colbert, Chapter Relations; Kathi Kromer, Associate Executive Director, ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Office; Kevin Maher, ALA Washington Office; Maddy McGonigle, ALA Washington Office; Megan Ortegon, ALA Washington Office; Emily Wagner, ALA Washington Office*

*Guests: Dee Brennan, Deborah Doyle, Keith Michael Fiels, Loida Garcia-Febo, Greg Knott, Melissa McBride, Michelle Robertson, Stephanie Saba, Nikki Scarpitti*

*Regrets: Sara Charlton*

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### New Reporting Structure

Marci reported that beginning September 1, 2018, OLA began reporting to the Washington Office (now known as the Public Policy and Advocacy Office). As a result, members should begin seeing a more coordinated effort as ALA works at the state and local level – and ultimately stronger advocacy efforts for libraries of all types at the local, state and national levels. Early projects that will stem from this merger include working with **freshman legislators**, an initiative being discussed at Midwinter in conjunction with Chapter Relations, as well as **finding contacts for key legislators during the 2019 Appropriations cycle**. The appropriations schedule is delayed this year due to the government shutdown, but outreach to appropriators will be taking place as usual once things are back on track.

### Website Revamp

One of the first outcomes of this merger was a revamped website: ALA's Advocacy resources were recently overhauled by both staffs, and can now be found at <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy-public-policy>. She asked Emily Wagner from the Public Policy and Advocacy Office to say a few words. Emily asked attendees to please include any feedback about the new website and noted that customizable templates and state one-pagers will soon be available for download. The advocacy team also has a "hack-a-thon" planned post-conference for additional brainstorming purposes. ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo also allocated money for a series of new advocacy videos as well, the first of which can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzRtum5xGQs>, and the group was encouraged to keep pushing our resources out to as many people as possible.

### State and Local Update

Megan Cusick began by referencing the six-month OLA activity report distributed to the group in their packets (attached) and mentioned that we have recently seen some local community issues that have become statewide debates. She used the EBSCO case in Colorado as an example; a CO family had objected to their children using databases in one school, alleging that it was a portal to pornographic materials. Today, the same family is engaged in a lawsuit against the Colorado Library Consortium (CLC) and EBSCO to implement stronger filters on K-12 databases and worked with another group to introduce legislation that would allow parents to sue for monetary damages if their child is able to access "sensitive" materials via school-provided databases. (<https://www.denverpost.com/2018/10/10/pornography-is-not-education-sues-colorado-library-consortium/>)

This issue escalated further than was expected, and the Colorado Library Association (CLA) worked with OLA and the Office for Intellectual Freedom to identify speakers and get advocates to the bill's public hearing while it was still in committee, where it was defeated on Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. It is a success story that relied on the hard work with all players involved and utilized ALA's crisis protocol as well. (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/state-and-local-protocol>)

The new contract that the Los Angeles Unified School District signed provided for 82 new high school librarians over the next two years, which is great progress, and sets a good precedent for other school districts going into contract negotiations in the next year. OLA is also working with school librarians in New Jersey, to support district-level advocacy efforts as well as legislative remedies to school library cuts.

The "From Awareness to Funding" report

(<https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/oclcresearch-awareness-to-funding.html>) that was released a year ago reinforced the urgency of advocacy work; yet, while there are some signs of loss of support for public services, there are also clear examples of community local support for public institutions. In Watchung, NJ, after the city council voted to close the local library, the town's population revolted and elected 2

new city councilors with pro-library platforms. In Escondido, CA, residents voted out a mayor and two council members who supported privatization of the local library.

### **Engage Advocacy Software**

All 50 states have transitioned to the Engage platform (<https://cqrcengage.com/ala/app/lookup?0&m=329886>). Mariel Colbert of Chapter Relations will be working with Megan to support Engage in the Chicago office, including Virtual Legislative Days for states that would like to extend their messaging. Engage helps with the legislative long game strategy, but it is also a good tool in crisis applications, and OLA and Chapters are making sure that states are prepared to use it however needed.

### **State Ecosystem Effort**

The State Ecosystem Task Force began two years ago, a joint partnership between AASL, OLA, Chapter Relations, and ACRL to conduct ESSA (<https://www.ed.gov/essa>) trainings. This resulted in the creation of lots of new partnerships, some success stories, and a commitment to continuing the discussion. The newest initiative is the creation of a task force, and an 18-month assignment to create an assessment tool and a go-forward strategy. Dorcas Hand is acting chair of this group, and a group of school and academic librarians have been drafted to form the team. The first meeting will take place at Midwinter on Monday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **I Love Libraries**

I Love Libraries ([www.ilovelibraries.org](http://www.ilovelibraries.org)) continues to have the second-highest social media presence (behind the main ALA Facebook page) for the ALA with 108,706 followers. Social media postings reach over 150,000 people per month, and average over 26,000 post engagements per month. The e-newsletter has 6,619 total subscribers, adding over 400 e-newsletter subscribers in the past six months; with an average open rate of 24%, average click-through rate of 19%. (Metrics demonstrate that e-newsletter average is less than 9%). Any members are encouraged to contribute content and success stories, particularly for the ILL social media feed. The newest edition of Quotable Facts was released just before the start of conference and are a great set of talking points and a wallet-sized elevator speech in one. (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/quotable-facts>)

33 Advocacy Bootcamps have been conducted over the past two years, and the program is currently on hiatus due to the merger with the Public Policy and Advocacy Office, as well as a current vacancy in the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

### **PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

National Library Legislative Day & Legislative Advocacy

As you may know, National Library Legislative Day will be a little bit different in 2019! In light of Annual Conference being held in Washington, DC this June, we will not hold NLLD in 2019. We are currently planning advocacy activities as a part of the regular Annual programming, but we will not be having any ALA coordinated Hill visits during the 2019 conference. We will resume our traditional NLLD in 2020.

We will be hosting a smaller, more strategic fly-in at the start of the appropriations cycle (February 25-26<sup>th</sup>). The fly-in event will be invitation only. The goal is for this to be a smaller, more strategic event for experienced advocates. Invitations will be dependent on target congressional members/districts for the onset of the appropriations cycle. More info on that event will be forthcoming.

In lieu of National Library Legislative Day, we are encouraging advocates to develop relationships with members of Congress at home.

### Goals for COLA through June – Group

Jeremy Johannesen began by noting the dynamics of this working group and observed that he is halfway through his year as COLA chair and is taking stock and assessing what has been accomplished so far. He thanked everyone for their hard work and encouraged it to continue from here. He also thanked the liaisons from the sun-set Advocacy Coordinating Group (ACG) that were in the room, representing various offices and divisions from around the ALA, and asked for input from attendees to voice their goals and interests for the year.

Many states have had an opportunity to host Advocacy Bootcamp, 33 in total, and said COLA should support re-Bootcamp efforts, as well as continuing trainings at local level. Marci noted that a new state plan is currently in development, and that OLA will continue to be the go-to resource on the local level, helping to strengthen Chapters, and emphasizing State Ecosystem work as well.

- An attendee observed that ALA-driven advocacy training at the state level is critical, and that we will be missing out on a very important opportunity if this does not continue; there should be an ALA-branded training session at every state conference in the country. It was encouraged that the group look at the OIF model, they started local trainings over 25 years ago, and the battle is won with a handful of advocates trained at a time. It was also noted that the Illinois Library Association gathers all new public library directors together each year, and this past year that group attended an Advocacy Bootcamp training session, and there is concern that this resource will not be available this year.
- The Kentucky Library Association offered Bootcamp training during their orientation last year to teach their new people new skills. Trainings build an army, and the member resolved to remind Council how imperative these kinds of trainings are.

Chapter Advocacy Exchange webinars will continue into the new year, held approximately monthly on various topics, partnering with Chapter Relations. The next topic will be on the 2020 Census and public libraries, held in February, with more information available on the Chapter Advocacy Exchange webpage (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/chapter-advocacy-exchange>)

Committee on Legislation members are also reaching out to other groups to disseminate information, the “liaison” idea spurred by our ACG members; we are promoting strength in unity!

Meeting adjourned.