

COMMITTEE ON LITERACY: REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE
COVERS THE PERIOD BETWEEN MIDWINTER MEETING AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ROSTER

CHAIR

- Kevin Reynolds

MEMBERS

- Kathleen J. Barker
- Hannah Elizabeth Evans
- Tiffeni J. Fontno
- Richard L. Huffine
- Hilda H. Loh-Guan
- Elizabeth Lovsin
- Veronica Leigh Milliner
- LaJuan Pringle
- Yiping Wang

ASSOCIATES

- Jacquie R. Kociubuk
- Shelley O'Rourke

EXECUTIVE BOARD LIAISON

- Tamika Barnes

STAFF LIAISONS

- Kristin Lahurd (primary liaison)
- Amber Hayes

CHARGE

To develop and recommend the association's policies related to the promotion of multiple literacies; to develop and encourage the development of programs, educational opportunities, and other resources that assist librarians and libraries in promoting literacy; to raise the awareness of literacy within the association; to work cooperatively with the Literacy Assembly, the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services and its advisory committee, and other ALA units, including the Washington Office, on efforts that have a literacy focus; to develop and maintain partnerships with national literacy organizations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Committee on Literacy and Literacy Assembly had robust meetings in Philadelphia at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting. Following those meetings, the Committee proceeded to plan one of our major initiatives this year, which is to launch a series of literacy-focused webinars. We decided the first webinar in the series would be on food literacy. We issued an invitation for proposals and were thrilled

with the response. Well over a dozen presentations were suggested. The Committee decided to capitalize on the amount of interest and by working with several of the proposers, we developed a two-part series on food literacy that would allow for many of the proposed ideas to be incorporated. We had scheduled the first webinar to be held in March.

Meanwhile, the pandemic impacted all of our lives and organizations in various ways. We decided to hold off on launching our webinar because the timing no longer seemed appropriate. The first webinar is now scheduled for July 22. The Committee and Assembly remained in communication through the spring, but, frankly, the disruption of the pandemic and the time that the chair needed to focus on his institution meant that we had fewer formal meetings and discussions compared with what we had been accustomed.

We have picked back up with the work we've been conducting on updating and organizing the [Literacy Clearinghouse](#). We also agreed to move all of our working files and communication, as well as all other Committee and Assembly work, into ALA Connect to provide better continuity for Committee and Assembly members and to better document our work.

Finally, Kristin Lahurd and Kevin Reynolds held an onboarding session with Tiffeni Fontno, the incoming chair, in order to help her have a smooth transition into her leadership role. We look forward to Tiffeni's leadership in the coming year!

EVENTS OR PROGRAMS

As noted above, our webinar series was postponed. The first will now be held on July 22 at 2:00 pm ET and will focus on food literacy access. This will be a one-hour webinar. Presenters for this session will include Courtney Boland (Northern Virginia Community College), Darcy Coover (Charleston County [SC] Public Library), Hillary Dodge (Pikes Peak Library District), and Michelle Jerney-Davis (Northern Virginia Community College). Also, on June 23, we will hold a virtual social gathering for the Literacy Assembly.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The Committee and Assembly will be holding virtual meetings in early July since the Annual Conference was cancelled. In addition, work on planning the remaining literacy webinar series will occur in the coming months. The Committee will also continue to lead, with the Assembly, the further development of the [Literacy Clearinghouse](#).

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER UNITS WITHIN ALA

Through the work of the Literacy Assembly, we interface with a wide variety of ALA units. We have been pleased with the increased interest and participation in the Assembly over the last year. In addition, the chair extends this array of interaction by serving as an active member of the ODLIS Advisory Committee.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK TO THE ALA STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Arguably, the Committee could be seen as relevant to all of ALA's key action areas, but it is, of course, most directly related to literacy, as well as to equitable access to information & library services and education & lifelong learning. Furthermore, the Committee's charge and work fall squarely within ALA's four strategic directions:

- **Advocacy:** Among other things, the committee has demonstrated the impact of libraries on literacy efforts, which directly addresses Advocacy Strategy #4, "Gather, develop, and disseminate research documenting the value, outcomes and impacts of libraries of all types."
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** With an expressed purpose of helping library workers "add, expand, and advocate for adult literacy services," the recently revised Literacy for All: Adult Literacy through Libraries toolkit furthers the EDI goal to "establish resources and support so libraries and librarians can be effective advocates for the inclusion of all individuals in the life of their community."
- **Information Policy:** Naturally, this committee serves as the obvious hub for guidance on policy pertaining to literacy concerns. In addition, the Committee and the Literacy Assembly serve as vital fora about partnerships and coalitions pertaining to literacy. This touches on Information Policy Strategy #3, "Lead and participate in effective coalitions, with member participation, to take action in addressing information policy issues."
- **Professional and Leadership Development:** The Committee provides ALA members opportunities to engage in important work of the association as well as to have opportunities for networking, leadership, and more. This addresses Professional and Leadership Development Strategy #2: "Develop pathways to support and guide networking, professional development, continuing education, and mentoring."

COMMITTEES SELF-CHECK ON ITS VALUE AND VISIBILITY

We believe the value of this committee remains quite high, especially since literacy is one of the most fundamental areas of focus for the Association. The visibility of the committee, while improved, still feels to be somewhat diminished relative to the importance of our mission and purpose.

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

I would like to take this opportunity to note that it has been an honor to be able serve as chair of the Committee on Literacy and the Literacy Assembly for two years. While this year has been a challenge due to the pandemic, I am proud of the work these groups have accomplished together. It must be also be stated that none of it would have been possible without the support of the truly talented staff who have given selflessly to this work. I want to especially thank Kristin Lahurd for her unwavering support of our efforts.