

**American Library Association Committee on Library Advocacy
Report to Council
Midwinter Meeting 2014, Philadelphia**

Submitted by Gina Millsap, Chair

Accomplishments

School Library Initiative

Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) leaders met with AASL leaders, President Barbara Stripling, and staff liaisons to finalize a School Library Action Plan for the coming year. Using the strategic plan of the 2012-2013 School Library Task Force the plan outlines twelve distinct areas of work for the association, which will be overseen by the Office for Library Advocacy (OLA)

- Community Outreach: Outreach to school libraries in crisis or difficult situations, including consultations, letters to the editors, and op-eds. Creation of templates for op-eds and letters to the editors
- “Crisis-Proofing” Initiative: Committee on Library Advocacy’s new effort to create proactive tips and resources for laying groundwork to protect libraries and prepare them for crisis situations. Will focus on all library types, beginning with school libraries.
- Declaration for the Right to Libraries: Outreach to school librarians, asking them to sponsor Declaration signings during AASL’s School Library Month, using a school version of the Declaration for the Right to Libraries in order to bring the critical role of school libraries into the spotlight.
- Digital Supplement: a stand-alone, strategic supplement of American Libraries magazine for use among members and external stakeholders. Potential partnerships with vendors and legislators who have championed school libraries and librarians. Targeted for 2014
- Messaging: enhancement of current school library messaging for media opportunities such as op-eds, and letters to the editor, as well as advocacy opportunities such as crisis messaging and talking points for decision-makers. Will include talking points on college- and career-readiness, Common Core (when needed) and other key points as indicated in AASL’s Standards for 21st Century Learning. Includes a student-focused emphasis.
- National Partnerships: expansion and further development of existing relationships and development of new relationships with organizations like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and American Association of School Administrators (AASA) at the national level
- Online tools for Advocates: Resources for parents and other advocates to make the case for school libraries, including talking points, PowerPoint presentations, and videos.

- Op-eds: placements targeted to multiple audiences, including school administrators, state and local-level decision-makers, and national policy makers. Specific focus on March 1 benchmark, when many school librarian and library cuts are determined.
- Success Stories: working with affiliates to find and showcase success stories
- Vendor & Publisher Partnerships: strategic collaboration on new and/or existing school-library focused initiatives, such as Follett Project Connect, which hopes to raise the profile of librarians while connecting the library with the classroom and influencing digital decisions.
- Web Portal: using www.ilovelibraries.org, ALA's advocacy website for the public, to showcase news, research and messaging about school libraries, as well as stories and testimony.
- Toolkit for Parents: materials for parents and local advocates to make the case for school libraries and librarians

The Declaration for the Right to Libraries

COLA has been working with the Office for Library Advocacy on ALA President Barbara Stripling's Declaration for the Right to Libraries campaign since its inception at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. As of Midwinter, 49 signing events had taken place around the country, with over 10,000 signatures collected, and more events scheduled for the year to come, including a culminating event at National Library Legislative Day. Beyond collecting signatures, the initiative stresses that the declaration is used as a vehicle to begin community conversation around the value of libraries.

In Philadelphia, COLA and OLA staff facilitated two signing events. On Thursday, January 23, there was a signing at the Free Library of Philadelphia System, in support of public, school and academic libraries. Local organizations involved include the Pennsylvania Library Association (Pala), the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA), the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA), and the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL). ALA President Barbara Stripling spoke, as well as Eileen Kern, PSLA President, Eileen Palmer, NJLA President, and Siobhan A. Reardon, President and Director of the Free Library of Philadelphia. State librarians Stacey Aldrich (Pennsylvania) and Mary Chute (New Jersey) were also in attendance.

On Monday, January 27, the Association of Philadelphia School Librarians and local school library groups convened at the Library Company of Philadelphia to show support of school libraries in Philadelphia. Speakers included Barbara Stripling, ALA President, Gail Dickinson, American Association of School Librarians President, Molly Roth, Library Company Development Director, Bernadette Kearney, APSL Librarian, Carol Kilimnik, Co-Founder of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools. Philadelphia students also attended.

A designated Declaration signing area, offering resources for doing a signing back at home was established in the Membership Pavilion throughout the Midwinter Meeting.

Member Involvement

Defining outcomes, service to membership, value and viability have been major focuses of the Committee on Library Advocacy, and as its subordinate group, the Advocacy Coordinating Subcommittee (ACG). COLA is developing a work plan to take the committee through the 2015 Annual Conference. Work plan topics include development of a mentoring/peer-to-peer network, a COLA communications plan, and additional growth of Advocacy University. Overall, the committee agreed it need to raise awareness about the valuable work of OLA, including crisis Response: OLA leads a staff team to deal with libraries who contact ALA for assistance during potential crisis (i.e., budget cuts, layoffs, state or local legislation issues). Services include consultation, letters of support from ALA leadership to decision-makers; placement of letters-to-the-editor and/op-eds, further involvement of ALA leadership.

Interactions with other units within ALA

The Advocacy Coordinating Group (ACG) of COLA is structured like an assembly, comprising elected division presidents and appointed committee chairs or their delegates from around the association. Its goals are to “exchange information and share ideas for coordination of programming and training; develop and promote strategies for increased advocacy activity; promote cooperation and enhance the effectiveness of advocacy activities throughout the Association; and strengthen ALA's national, state, local and international advocacy efforts.”

As such, the ACG holds monthly conference calls and biannual meetings at ALA conferences. To date, it has functioned primarily as information sharing group. However, the group is now embarking on substantive discussion about a shared vision for advocating for the value of the profession. Three questions posed to the group for discussion at Midwinter and beyond are:

- How can we improve the advocacy work of ALA overall?
- How do we begin to determine if our efforts are making a difference?
- What can we do in the upcoming months to explore this idea?

Self-Check

Although some working groups have emerged to complete some projects of the Work Plan, formal task forces and subcommittees have not been formed yet.

The Advocacy Training Subcommittee of COLA is dormant at this time and may be disbanded, depending on outcomes of the work plan.

Relationship of the committee's work to the ALA strategic plan

The Work of the Committee on Library Advocacy and the Advocacy Coordinating Group connects directly with Goal Area 1: Advocacy, Funding and Public Policy of the current ALA Strategic Plan:

Goal Statement: ALA equips and leads advocates for libraries, library issues and the library profession, and plays a key role in formulating legislation, policies and standards that affect library and information services.

- Objective (1): Increase public awareness of the value and impact of all types of libraries and the important role of librarians and other library staff.
- Objective (2): Increase research and evaluation documenting the value and impact of all libraries.
- Objective (3): Increase resources and training for advocates seeking to secure increased funding and support for all libraries.
- Objective (4): Lead advocacy for crucial library issues such as literacy, intellectual freedom, privacy, fair use, preservation of our cultural heritage, information literacy, equity of access, and permanent no fee public access to government information.
- Objective (5): Increase ALA's role in the formulation of library-related local, state, national, and international legislation, policies and standards.
- Objective (6): Increase collaboration and alliances with organizations at all levels to advance legislation and public policy issues affecting libraries, librarians and information services.
- Objective (7) Use new technologies to build greater public understanding and support for libraries of all types.

The Work of the Committee on Library Advocacy and the Advocacy Coordinating Group also connects directly with the Strategic Framework brought forth by the Executive Board at the ALA 2014 Midwinter Meeting:

ALA shall advocate the public value of librarians, libraries and information services and seek to:

- Focus ALA's mission and priorities working with the three constituencies: ALA members, libraries, and the public.
- Represent libraries and information providers at the local, state, federal and international levels while building support for libraries and librarians through public awareness.
- Assure legislation and policies that support information and library services in all types of libraries and information environments.
- Provide a vision of innovation, enable the future of libraries and promote libraries as centers of community engagement and participatory librarianship.
- Promote ALA's core values and emphasize the impact of libraries, as represented by ALA's Declaration for the Right to Libraries, to form the basis for advocacy and community conversations.