

## **Report of the Committee on Library Advocacy and Advocacy Coordinating Group**

2015 Annual Conference, San Francisco, California

Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 1:00 – 2:30 PM

COLA Charge: To support the efforts of advocates for all types of libraries; to develop resources, networks and training materials for advocates at the local, state and national levels with particular emphasis on the grassroots level; to work closely with the Office for Library Advocacy in collaboration with the Public Awareness Committee, the Chapter Relations Committee, the Committee on Legislation, and other ALA offices, divisions, and roundtables as well as external groups to integrate advocacy efforts into the overall planning, priorities and policies of the association; and to cultivate future leadership in order to sustain and enhance the advocacy efforts of the association.

Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) Roster: Gina Millsap, Chair; Mallory Arents Intern; Natarsha Miller Intern; Alexia Hudson-Ward Executive Board Liaison; Gladys Smiley Bell; Elizabeth Burns Member; Lauren Andrea Comito; Kristine L. Ferry; Judith A. Gibbons; Carl A. Harvey, II; Dr. Majed J. Khader; Nancy Jo Lambert; Daniel C. Mack; Rhonda K. Puntney Gould

Advocacy Coordinating Group Charge: The purpose of the Advocacy Coordinating Group of the ALA Committee on Library Advocacy is to foster communication and cooperation among all interested committees, units, and divisions in order to develop programs and activities in support of library advocacy and the Association's advocacy plan. The Advocacy Coordinating Group will 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.

Advocacy Coordinating Group Roster: Sonia Alcantara-Antoine, PAC; Janet Benedict, LLAMA; Carol A. Brey-Casiano, Campaign for World's Libraries; Melissa Cardenas-Dow, APALA; Mr. Aaron W. Dobbs, OITP; Aimee Fifarek, Literacy Assembly; Loida A. Garcia-Febo, IFLA; Terri L. Grief, AASL; Ann Hamilton, Chapter Relations Committee; Ms. Robyn M. Lupa, ALSC; Paul D. Moeller, ALCTS; Rose E. Mosley, United For Libraries; Joe Murphy, III, LITA; Jenna Nemecek-Loise, ALSC; Heawon Paick, APALA; Rhonda K. Puntney, ASCLA; Dr. Lian Ruan, ACRL; Jan W. Sanders, PLA; Dr. Mary Stansbury, Committee on Accreditation; Kristin L. Strohmeyer, LIRT; Hilda K. Weisburg, AASL; Vivian R. Wynn, Committee on Legislation

### **New Role for Advocacy Coordinating Group**

This joint meeting of the Committee on Library Advocacy and its subgroup, the Advocacy Coordinating Group focused on the approved Advocacy Implementation Plan. In summary:

1. *Own*: The Advocacy Plan "belongs" to the Advocacy Coordinating Group.
2. *Align* – Advocacy Coordinating Group members will be responsible for taking the plan to their respective groups and developing a process that aligns the group advocacy plan with ALA's plan for the association and our profession
3. *Act* – The Advocacy Coordinating Group will develop an action plan that focuses on the alignment of their group plan and ALA's plan and be prepared to share that at an upcoming ACG meeting.

With the approval of the new Advocacy Implementation Plan, the Advocacy Coordinating Group has an opportunity to move from information sharing role to a strategic planning role.

Gina Millsap, Chair, referred to the Advocacy Implementation Plan and asked how we move to implementation with such a vast institution as ALA, noting that we can achieve a higher level of results if we work collectively. How can we move to the next level? She mentioned a recent conversation with ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels about the plan, where she asked two key questions: who owns the plan? And who has the authority to ask "where are we on this?" She said that Keith had indicated that this role fell to the Advocacy Coordinating Group, and read some of his recent email to the group:

*As you may know, we have been working diligently on a new strategic plan for the association, which encompasses three areas: Advocacy, Leadership and Professional Development, and Information Policy. This new strategic plan offers the most articulated vision for advocacy that ALA has ever seen, capturing an extensive range of member ideas and suggestions. We see the plan as encompassing a three to five year horizon, and know that our first order of business will be to identify those items we want to tackle this coming year, with an understanding that some strategies will move ahead more quickly than others.*

*Although traditionally thought of as an information sharing group, the Advocacy Coordinating Group, which includes key stakeholders in advocacy form around the association, is perfectly poised to help shepherd this plan forward, and move more closely to its official charge: "to foster communication and cooperation among all interested committees, units, and divisions in order to develop programs and activities in support of library advocacy and the association's advocacy plan. The Advocacy Coordinating Group will 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."*

Gina asked the group how we can get started and opened the discussion. Much discussion ensued, with the following salient points:

#### INITIAL REACTIONS

- Some said that we've been talking about this for years. Now that we have an opportunity to come together with one unified voice is very exciting: there's been dissonance and now there's an opportunity for clarity. Some said that we can't afford to wait any longer and that the ALA runs slowly, even with today's technology: how we do this effectively, even with an outline in place?
- Initial reaction by some was that the plan was overwhelming and there wasn't clarity as to this group's role. Marci noted that although there is a lot of work to be done, part of our role is to prioritize the work. Some said that focusing on the new public awareness campaign was a priority. Gina clarified that the group isn't in charge of marketing the new public awareness campaign or anything at the tactical level. Rather, it's to determine how to integrate this effort into the overall Advocacy Implementation plan. Others felt that organizing was our first priority.
- Sense of Unity: It was said that the group needs to build the sense of unity among all divisions and groups within ALA and to remember that we have more in common than what separates us. It's more powerful when we speak in a single voice rather than concentrating on "our own slice of the pie," We have to work together.
- Collaboration: The challenge of running competing advocacy programs at the same time was noted. There was a movement to encourage groups to work together better, and partner in better ways. A Level Playing Field for Advocacy Efforts: It was said that there are often feelings from youth divisions that they do not get the same attention or respect as other groups within the Association. A core message and plan that we all stand behind makes things immediately relevant to everyone at once, and puts everyone on an equal playing field.
- It was asked whose job it will be to go back to various boards and facilitate discussion about how we are working to align efforts and our new role. Gina said that those in the Advocacy Coordinating Group are the liaisons, and that we'll need to report to our respective groups and discuss challenges. The plan will be shared with all state affiliates and Chapters, as well. Gina said that the group needs to feel that it owns the advocacy plan or they'll never be able to sell it. The group should focus on alignment and opportunities.

- It was suggested that the excitement the group was feeling about the plan would help bring positive emotions to the table, which would help sell the plan. Facts and specifics could come later, but emotions and enthusiasm were key.

#### ACTION STEPS

- Jan Sanders she would take the Plan to the PLA board for their awareness and ask that it would be placed on the PLA site where members can review, comment, and determine how it fits in with PLA's strategic plan. Gina asked what would happen if PLA was not interested. Jan said that she would not take no for an answer.
- Hilda Weisberg said this was a key time for AASL and she would bring the plan to them as well.
- COLA members offered to help bring the plan to other groups around the association and to help coordinate messaging.
- Jenny Benedict said that LLAMA's initial response to the plan was not positive, but was committed to working with LLAMA so that they incorporate advocacy efforts into their goals and leadership development work.
- Ben Hunter said that there are 50+ chapters all working on various advocacy efforts and coordination would be a challenge. Marci noted that one of the goals of the plan is for all states to have an advocacy plan. She thought that soliciting chapters for best practices, including advocacy plans, would be a way to start. She offered to work with Ben and Chapter Relations on this effort.
- Gina noted that the group is being asked to take on a new charge – was everyone comfortable with this? There was a consensus that the group was comfortable with the new charge. Some said it didn't feel like a new responsibility, just a new way to work – an alignment of resources.
- The group agreed to go back to their respective divisions, round tables, boards, committees and other groups to discuss the advocacy plan. A mechanism for doing so would be developed shortly after conference.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Using the "Advocacy River" infographic is very useful in explaining how all units and ALA groups fit in.
- Asking people to review their existing plans, and then see how this will work with what's already in place.

- Accurate messaging and precise words are very important, and asking the question “how can your group use the Advocacy Implementation Plan to move your own efforts forward?”
- Hilda recalled a 3M-sponsored marketing workshop she took associated with the launch of the Campaign for America’s Libraries in 2001. She named the four components of marketing: awareness, interest, desire, and action, and said we should apply these principles in our efforts.
- Develop a tracking mechanism so that the group will get feedback. It was noted that YALSA has benchmarking tools that would be useful in the plan. The Library Snapshot Day mechanism for gathering information was also mentioned.

#### NEXT STEPS

Gina reiterated that the Advocacy Coordinating Group has agreed to “own” the Advocacy Implementation Plan. Next steps would include taking the plan back to respective groups throughout the association and work with those groups to align their advocacy strategies with the plan, and help build messaging for Libraries Transform, the new public awareness campaign. She asked to group to think about the following questions.

- With this new role, how can we facilitate and assist in coordinating the advocacy plan?
- How do we envision it really working? What is ACG’s role in kick-starting discussion and adoption of the plan by all advocacy groups of ALA?
- The group is moving from one of information exchange to facilitator. What is our process for doing this?

Marci reviewed a rough timeline:

Summer 2015:	Follow-up conference call with ACG (date tbd) Launch of Libraries Transform to library community
Fall 2015:	Public Launch of Libraries Transform Discussions with respective groups about Advocacy Implementation Plan Additional conference calls (tbd) to finalize process and create a rubric that people can work with.
Midwinter 2016:	Goals for Advocacy Coordinating Group in place

Meeting adjourned.