

**American Library Association Committee on Organization
Report to Council
Annual Conference 2014—Las Vegas, Nevada**

During the past year COO has focused on two issues:

1. Communication by ALA Committees and Council Committees to members.
2. Lifespan of Membership Initiative Groups (MIGs)

COO presents an action item related to each of these issues for Council's consideration.

Communication to ALA members by ALA Committees and Council Committees

The following assumptions have guided COO in its thinking about this issue:

ALA members are entitled to free access to information about what the committees that serve them are working on, have accomplished, or plan to do. This is consistent with ALA's open meetings (Policy 7.4.4) and open activities policy (Policy A.4.3.16).

Regular written reports—made public at least twice a year—are a viable method of assuring this openness about committee activities to all members.

Responsibility for making these reports available to the membership lies with the chairs of the ALA and Council committees.

COO has encouraged ALA Committees and Council Committees to issue public reports at least twice a year. These reports should follow practices described in COO's 2013 Annual Conference report to Council:

Each committee prepare a report in a form that most effectively conveys information that should be shared with and made available to elected leaders and members. Committee chairs would receive reminders along with what composition teachers call "writing prompts"—i.e., suggestions or topics that can stimulate ideas worth writing about. Prompts include:

- Accomplishments
- Planned activities
- Issues that affect the committee's work and their implications for the future
- Interactions with other units within ALA
- Relationship of the committee's work to the ALA strategic plan
- Current level of committee members' involvement (more substantive than an attendance roll)
- Committee self-check on its value and viability (update charge, discontinue committee, consolidate with another, change structure, other observations)
- Other issues of each committee's own devising

COO encourages committees to include information in those reports that goes beyond action items brought to Council—a section that addresses issues, as appropriate, such as those in the bulleted list above.

Committee chairs have been encouraged through the Committee Chairs Connect group and through communications from the ALA Governance Office to inform that office when a report has been posted in a place accessible to ALA members. The Governance Office has posted links to these reports at http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/cmte_info_report. This site includes links to committee reports to Council. COO has learned that this list is incomplete because some committees have posted reports on their Connect site, their ALA Web site, or elsewhere but have not reported the links for those reports to the Governance office. COO does not know where various committees have posted reports whose location has not been shared with the Governance Office. Some committees' follow-through on reporting links to the Governance Office has been inconsistent.

Because the guidelines presented in 2013 were procedural, information of the sort that appears in the text box above is not considered ALA policy.

COO has noticed an omission in ALA policy. Policy A.5.5 addresses "Requirements for Committee Service." These requirements address expectations for participation and for providing "explanation of their absences and/or inability to participate" in a committee's meetings or work. These provisions apply, of course, to chairs as well as to all other members of committees. However nothing in ALA policy addresses the responsibilities of chairs of ALA committees and Council Committees.

COO recommends that Council clarify the role of chairs of ALA committees and Council Committees by adopting a policy addressing their distinct responsibilities. The policy recommendation in Action item #1 fills the existing void:

ACTION item #1: Resolved, that Council approves as policy the following provision:

Each chair of an ALA Committee or a Council Committee is responsible for submitting to the ALA Executive Director at least two times each year a substantive report on the committee's work and accomplishments so that these reports can be made available to all interested ALA members. Such reports may address, but not be limited to, matters such as accomplishments, planned activities, issues that affect the committee's work and their implications for the future, interactions with other units within ALA, relationship of the committee's work to the ALA strategic plan, current level of committee members' involvement (more substantive than an attendance roll), committee self-check on its value and viability (update charge, discontinue committee, consolidate with another, change structure, other observations).

Lifespan of Membership Initiative Groups (MIGs)

ALA Policy A.4.3.12 states:

A Membership Initiative Group (MIG) is formed when a group of ALA members identifies a common concern or interest about librarianship which falls outside the delegated responsibility of a single division, roundtable, or unit, and wishes **to establish a short-term mechanism** to address this concern or interest. To establish a MIG, which must be approved by COO and reported to Council, a group must submit to the Committee on Organization a statement of purpose, at least one hundred signatures of ALA members in good standing, and the names and addresses of designated organizers. *[Emphasis added.]*

During its meetings in Philadelphia in January 2014 COO approved two new MIGs, the Diversity Membership Initiative Group and the Programming Librarian Membership Initiative Group. COO wondered at that time what “short-term” means in Policy 4.3.12.

Governance Office staff have since provided committee members with past COO documents.

A 2008 document stated: “A Membership Initiative Group shall exist for three years, following which it must petition for another three years, apply for another place within the ALA structure, or disband.” And recommended that “The MIG will exist for three years, after which it may re-petition for another three-year period.”

Another 2008 document from ALA staff stated: “Current guidelines allow continuation of a Member Initiative Group for three (3) years, following which “the MIG must either disband or apply for a place within the ALA structure.”

And recommended that it be changed to:

“The MIG will exist for three years, after which it may re-petition for another three-year period.”

Some MIGs have been in existence for more than three years but have not petitioned for renewal. For example, the Libraries Foster Community Engagement MIG has developed into an active community serving ALA members’ interests. Periodic organizational self-examination is healthy. It is built in to the MIG structure but has not been carried out consistently. Other MIGs have served their purpose and ceased.

To preserve MIGs, a useful member organization form, and to assure that such organizations do not linger in the Handbook of Organization past their viability, COO affirms the three-year renewal cycle. The information about MIGs at <http://www.ala.org/groups/mcoms/migs> states that

At the end of its first three years of existence, a membership initiative group may request renewal for one additional three-year term by providing a petition for that purpose signed by at least 100 ALA members in good standing to the ALA Committee on Organization, may request another place within the ALA structure by following the procedures for establishing that type of group, or may request the ALA COO to disband it.

With the exception of special task forces (which are usually appointed by the ALA president), MIGs are the only membership units that at the time of their creation are time-limited. COO recommends the following change to the guidelines:

At the end of its first three years of existence, a membership initiative group may request renewal for an additional three-year term by providing a petition for that purpose signed by at least 100 ALA members in good standing to the ALA Committee on Organization, may request another place within the ALA structure by following the procedures for establishing that type of group, or may request the ALA COO to disband it. These same options are open to a MIG at the conclusion of each three-year period of its existence.

This requires slight revision of Policy A.4.3.12 through addition of the highlighted text:

A Membership Initiative Groups (MIG) is formed when a group of ALA members identifies a common concern or interest about librarianship which falls outside the delegated responsibility of a single division, roundtable, or unit, and wishes to establish a short-term, **renewable** mechanism to address this concern or interest. To establish a MIG, which must be approved by COO and reported to Council, a group must submit to the Committee on Organization a statement of purpose, at least one hundred signatures of ALA members in good standing, and the names and addresses of designated organizers. **Once established, a MIG may operate for three years at which point it may re-petition for another three- year term, may request another place within the ALA structure by following the procedures for establishing that type of group, or may request the ALA COO to disband it. The re-petitioning process can be renewed every three years. If the re-petition process is not carried out when due, the MIG will be disbanded.**

ACTION item #2: Resolved, that Council approves the following revision to ALA policy A.4.3.12:

A Membership Initiative Groups (MIG) is formed when a group of ALA members identifies a common concern or interest about librarianship which falls outside the delegated responsibility of a single division, roundtable, or unit, and wishes to establish a short-term, renewable mechanism to address this concern or interest. To establish a MIG, which must be approved by COO and reported to Council, a group must submit to the Committee on Organization a statement of purpose, at least one hundred signatures of ALA members in good standing, and the names and addresses of designated organizers. Once established, a MIG may operate for three years at which point it may re-petition for another three- year term or may request another place within the ALA structure by following the procedures for establishing that type of group, or may request the ALA COO to disband it. The re-petitioning process can be renewed every three years. If the re-petition process is not carried out when due, the MIG will be disbanded.

INFORMATION ITEM

In the spring COO reported to Council the creation of a new Membership Initiative Group, the Librarians Build Communities Membership Initiative Group. The full list of current MIGS is posted at <http://www.ala.org/groups/mcoms/migs>

Respectfully submitted to the ALA Council, June 29, 2014

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