

REPORT TO ALA COUNCIL OF THE DIGITAL CONTENT WORKING GROUP (DCWG)

Sari Feldman and Robert Wolven, Co-chairs  
2014 ALA Annual Meeting, Las Vegas

Since the 2014 Midwinter Meeting, there have been several promising developments. Simon & Schuster announced that their full catalog of ebooks would be available to all U.S. libraries via three distributors. For more than a year, Simon & Schuster operated a library ebook lending pilot in New York City and some other markets. Also in June, the State of Connecticut announced that a new statewide ebook platform will be developed under the auspices of the Connecticut State Library.

Key activities of the Digital Content Working Group (DCWG) include the June publication of “Digital Discoveries,” a supplement to *American Libraries* focused on digital content. DCWG also engaged in outreach via presentations and discussions at the Public Library Association National Conference, the State of Connecticut Ebook Workshop, and the Paris Book Fair. A review of library ebook issues was just published as an article in the 2014 *Library and Book Trade Almanac*, authored by DCWG member Rob Maier and Nadine Vassallo, a staffer of the Book Industry Study Group.

ALA has made a difference. We know this to be true from our discussions with publishers and others in the publishing ecosystem. This sense is also reflected in the larger community, as suggested in a recent article in *Publishers Weekly*:

“... the ALA DCWG is now widely regarded as a success. And, given the prominence of digital issues in libraries, it could well be among the most important ventures the ALA has ever launched. But looking back, it all could have been different, if not for a few key strategy decisions, support from ALA leaders—and a whole lot of patience.”

From “ALA 2014: After Success on E-book Access, ALA Looks Ahead,” Andrew Richard Albanese, *Publishers Weekly*, June 13, 2014

#### A TIME OF TRANSITION

We have served as co-chairs of the DCWG since its inception three years ago. We appreciate the privilege of serving ALA and U.S. libraries in this way, but we felt it was time for new leadership to take charge. Thus, this will be our last report as co-chairs of the DCWG.

ALA President-elect Courtney Young appointed current DCWG member Erika Linke (Associate Dean of Libraries, Carnegie Mellon University) and PLA President Carolyn Anthony (Director, Skokie (Illinois) Public Library) as incoming DCWG co-chairs. We are pleased (and relieved!) that DCWG will be led by these strong co-chairs to complement the excellent work of the ALA staff. The new roster for the 2014-2016 DCWG will be in place soon.

The DCWG will continue to focus on the library ebook issue as many challenges (especially high prices) remain. Additionally, the group’s other priorities will center around digital preservation and media beyond ebooks. The particular priorities are being formulated at this meeting and in several weeks after the conference.

We appreciate the continuing strong support of ALA leadership and the membership at large.