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June 22, 2015

American Library Association

Strategic Directions

Mission

The mission of the American Library Association is to “provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.”

Core Organizational Values

The Association is committed to:

- Extending and expanding library services in America and around the world
- All types of libraries - academic, public, school and special
- All librarians, library staff, trustees and other individuals and groups working to improve library services
- Member service
- An open, inclusive, and collaborative environment
- Ethics, professionalism and integrity
- Excellence and innovation
- Intellectual freedom
- Social responsibility and the public good

Key Action Areas

Advocacy for Libraries and the Profession

ALA actively works to increase public awareness of the crucial value of libraries and librarians, to promote state and national legislation beneficial to libraries and library users, and to supply the resources, training and support networks needed by local advocates seeking to increase support for libraries of all types.

Diversity

Libraries play a crucial role in empowering diverse populations for full participation in a democratic society. In the library workforce, programs of recruitment, training, development, advancement and promotion are needed in order to increase and retain diverse library personnel who are reflective of the society we serve. Within the Association and in the services and operations of libraries, efforts to include diversity in programs, activities, services, professional literature, products and continuing education must be ongoing and encouraged.

Education and Lifelong Learning

ALA provides opportunities for the professional development and education of all library staff members and trustees; it promotes continuous, lifelong learning for all people through library and information services of every type.

Equitable Access to Information and Library Services

ALA recognizes the critical need for access to library and information resources, services, and technologies by all people, especially those who may experience language or literacy-related barriers; economic distress; cultural or social isolation; physical or attitudinal barriers; racism; discrimination on the basis of appearance, ethnicity, immigrant status, housing status, religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression; or barriers to equal education, employment, and housing.

Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual freedom is a basic right in a democratic society and a core value of the library profession. ALA actively defends the privacy and right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Literacy

ALA assists and promotes libraries in helping children and adults develop the skills they need, including the ability to read and use technology, understanding that the ability to seek and effectively utilize information resources is essential in a global information society.

Organizational Excellence

The association is inclusive, effective and responsive to the needs of ALA members.

Transforming Libraries

ALA provides leadership in the transformation of libraries and library services in a dynamic and increasingly global digital information environment. Every library is a hub of community engagement, innovation and continual learning.

Strategic Directions

Advocacy

ALA and its members work with libraries, the broader library community and members of the public to advocate for the value of libraries and for public support for libraries of all types at the local, state, federal and international level.

This work includes a broad continuum of activities, including raising public awareness of the value of libraries, training and supporting library advocates, advancing legislation and policies that support information and library services in all types of libraries, and effectively responding to specific opportunities and threats.

Advocacy efforts support ALA's core values, provide a vision of innovation, focus on the impact of libraries and librarians, enable the future of libraries and promote libraries as centers of community engagement, lifelong discovery, and learning.

Goals

- There is deep public understanding of the value and impact of libraries of all types on the communities they serve, the broad range of services offered by libraries, and the indispensable role of the librarian and library staff in providing these services.
- Decision-makers and stakeholders see a nationwide network of library advocates, advocating for libraries of all types.
- The library is a hub of community engagement and continual learning: a place to form the critical thinking skills fundamental to learning in a technologically evolving world, to access information, and to create and share new knowledge.
- Libraries are funded with staff and resources to meet the needs of their communities.

- Across a diverse library community, there is a shared focus and common understanding of advocacy and a sustained commitment to work collaboratively to reach common advocacy goals.
- Advocacy is integrated into the daily work of librarians and library staff.
- Advocacy is part of educational preparation for librarians and library staff.
- All libraries and all states have an advocacy plan.
- ALA plays a key role in formulating legislation, policies, and standards that affect libraries and is recognized in the U.S. as the voice for libraries and librarianship.
- ALA works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to achieve library advocacy goals.
- ALA equips the library community with resources and training, available in a wide variety of formats and venues.

Strategies

1. Develop a sustained national advocacy campaign to increase public awareness of the value, impact and services provided by librarians and libraries of all types.
2. Provide coordinated resources and training to keep library advocates informed and engaged.
3. Recruit, mobilize and inspire a growing network of library advocates at the local, state, national and international levels.
4. Gather, develop, and disseminate research documenting the value, outcomes and impacts of libraries of all types.
5. Explore funding, organizational and governance structures and their impact on libraries of all types in order to ensure the sustainability and future of libraries.
6. Identify advocacy best practices, using research and evidence to increase support and funding for libraries of all types.
7. Identify and work with partners and stakeholders to achieve advocacy goals for all types of libraries.

Information Policy

ALA's information policy efforts empower people to use libraries and information-based resources to improve their lives and communities. Information policy comprises laws, regulations, court decisions, doctrines, and other decision-making and practices related to information creation, storage, access, preservation, communication, accessibility, and dissemination.

ALA advocates in diverse policy areas including intellectual freedom, privacy, civil liberties, telecommunications, funding for education and research programs, funding for libraries, copyright and licensing, open access, government information, and literacy. Progress in these policy areas enables libraries to advance important societal goals such as employment, education, entrepreneurship, equity, personal empowerment, community engagement, creation of new knowledge, literacy, and civic participation. ALA's interests reside at the local, regional, state, national, and international levels. ALA serves as a knowledgeable resource and advocate on policy issues within these areas for ALA members, library professionals, decision makers and influencers, the media, and the public.

Goals

- ALA is among the first tier of groups that governments and other organizations turn to and trust on information policy issues.
- Treaties (and other international statements), legislation, regulation, court cases, corporate policies, and other important information policy outcomes incorporate ALA positions.
- ALA policy positions are easily available, accessible and comprehensible to all audiences.
- ALA leaders have sufficient understanding of information policy so that they may be effective policy advocates. Some of these leaders are cultivated as national policy champions. The ALA and library communities at large understand the basics of information policy and why it is important for libraries.
- The requisite structures (including social media and other technology) are in place for ALA to engage in effective advocacy on information policy in the long run.

Strategies

1. Develop and revise positions and strategies for each information policy issue based on ALA values and priorities and substantive (facts and data) and analysis of threats and politics.
2. Develop and maintain information policy messaging and mechanisms to communicate with all relevant audiences.
3. Lead and participate in effective coalitions, with member participation, to take action in addressing information policy issues.
4. Initiate policy advocacy (including research) towards the attainment of ALA information policy goals.
5. Develop and maintain a process for coordinating information policy activities across policy topics and ALA units.

Professional and Leadership Development

Recognizing that the professional and leadership development of all who work in libraries is essential to high-quality professional practice and the future of libraries and information services, ALA will:

- Provide professional development opportunities appropriate to all levels of experience and expertise, in multiple formats/venues, with diverse presenters and educators;
- Provide leadership development opportunities both within the Association and for the field;
- Maintain strong but flexible accreditation standards and processes;
- Coordinate the multiple opportunities available throughout ALA to provide coherent and accessible continuing education frameworks for all members;
- Attach meaningful recognition to learning opportunities;
- Increase diversity and inclusion within the field;
- Provide clear pathways that help members set and meet professional and leadership development goals;
- Develop a pervasive culture that encourages continuous learning based on content and forms of recognition provided by ALA;
- Align leadership development and continuing education with the best thinking about the changing information environment and ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries.

Goals

- ALA is a premier provider of quality professional development, including continuing education, for a global membership.
- All library staff and trustees have the education and training they need to be successful in a disruptive environment, with pathways and a suite of options that meet them where they are.
- There is a commitment to ongoing professional development and continuing education with formal, meaningful recognition (e.g., certification, digital badging, micro-credentialing).
- It is easy for members to get involved in ALA.
- Association-wide mentoring engages emerging leaders and supports diversity. Paths to leadership within the Association are clear, and people at all levels want and are helped to be library leaders. Leadership is recognized as both formal and informal, managerial and non-managerial.
- Peer-to-peer learning/interaction facilitated by ALA helps members reach their goals.

- Librarianship and library leadership reflect the communities they serve as well as the world around them.
- The outcome of learning is knowledge supporting positive individual and organizational change.
- The MLIS curriculum addresses changing 21st-century library and information services and community needs.
- Library administrators and trustees value and support all library staff having professional and leadership development opportunities.
- Libraries are viewed as exciting places that offer various career paths for people who want to work in them.

Strategies

1. Develop the ALA professional development space as one centralized online space to search and discover all ALA learning options (all formats, all topic areas, all levels, all ALA sources) and related tools including self-assessment, recognition, and tracking. Integrate face-to-face, online and blended learning.
2. Develop pathways to support and guide networking, professional development, continuing education, and mentoring.
3. Develop clear education tracks and streams of content for continuing education, with formal, meaningful mechanisms to recognize achievement.
4. Articulate the role of engagement within the Association in professional and leadership development.
5. Facilitate and increase opportunities for informal, collaborative, and peer-to-peer, member-to-member learning/ activity at face-to-face events and in online spaces.
6. Develop an association-wide mentoring/ peer-to-peer network, building on components throughout the Association, its division and round tables, affiliates and chapters, to engage emerging leaders and support diversity and inclusion.
7. Enhance recruitment/retention for diversity across the profession.
8. Focus on changing practice in a rapidly evolving environment; adjust competency statements, standards, and content to the skills and knowledge needed in libraries as they continuously evolve.
9. Work with graduate programs in LIS to rethink and reenergize LIS curricula and accreditation and improve the connections with changing workforce skill requirements.

The key actions areas are approved by the ALA Council as programmatic priorities on an annual basis. The strategic directions, goals and strategies represent areas of intense focus for the next 3-5 years. The goals articulate the outcomes we would like to achieve and answer the question: "what would success look like?" The strategies articulate how we would move toward the achievement of these goals. For each of the strategic directions, an implementation plan outlines objectives that support each strategy and tactics to achieve these objectives. These are updated on an ongoing basis as part of a continuous process of assessment and evaluation, and are reflected in the Association's annual action plan and budget.