

**American Library Association
Midwinter 2017 Executive Board
President-Elect Report**

James G. Neal

The first six months of my service as ALA President-Elect have been focused on orientation, consultation, preparation, planning and participation. The President-Elect works very closely with the Executive Board and its Executive Committee, with the Council and ALA committees, and with ALA staff. I am deeply appreciative of the support and guidance I have received, and am awed by the extraordinary accomplishments and commitment of ALA staff and the Association's member volunteers.

Orientation

On September 6, I participated in a full day of media training in Chicago with an external consultant and the Public Awareness staff.

On September 7-8, I completed an orientation to the offices, divisions and units of the ALA Chicago headquarters.

On October 10, I spent a day with the staff at the ALA Washington Office, reviewing and discussing the work of the Office of Government Relations and the Office of Information Technology Policy.

In all cases, the learning, sharing and networking experience was very positive. It was an important opportunity to build working relationships and to understand how the ALA president interacts with the staff and how that partnership can be most effective.

Over the next six months, I will continue to seek out opportunities to meet and learn from the staffs of the various ALA divisions, offices and administrative units to expand my knowledge and effectiveness.

Consultation

I have consulted regularly with the members of the Executive Board and its Executive Committee, division leaders, committee and round table chairs, ALA staff, and past leaders of ALA on topics of interest, on ALA programs and projects, and on priorities for action over the next several years. The Executive Board and the Executive Committee meet regularly by conference call, and the Executive Board held its regular fall meeting in Chicago on October 20-23. I have also spoken with dozens of ALA members about particular topics and about their aspirations for ALA.

I have recruited a powerhouse presidential advisory committee, reflecting the full diversity of the membership of ALA. The advisory committee met in Chicago on October 23-24 to discuss priorities for action during my term as President, building on the work of Libraries Transform, and Libraries Transform: The Expert in the Library. We will meet again at Midwinter in Atlanta.

I also have the benefit of working with an outstanding class of division presidents-elect. We met in Chicago on October 19, and will meet again at Midwinter in Atlanta. Our focus is on sharing information about our goals and plans, preparing for the inaugural event in Chicago in June 2017, and discussing the working relationship between ALA and the divisions.

Preparation

One of the responsibilities of the President-Elect is to work with the Committee on Committees of ALA Council and with the Committee on Appointments to propose individuals to serve on the various Council, ALA and joint committees. Appointments are made to 15 Council committees, 20 ALA committees, and 2 joint committees. During November and December, information about the individuals who volunteered to serve on these committees was reviewed and discussed, and the draft membership has now been finalized for all 37 committees. Input was also solicited from current committee chairs and staff liaisons. We focused on reflecting the full diversity of ALA in these appointments. As part of these committee appointments, we also work on the identification of individuals to serve as interns on the committees. The letters of invitation will be sent to the prospective committee members after Midwinter. We are assisted in this complex and rigorous assignment by the outstanding governance office staff, in particular Kerri Price. I note with enthusiasm the large number of ALA members who volunteer for these committee assignments. Their experience, expertise and commitment to the Association, the profession and libraries, make this task very challenging.

The Committee on Appointments finalized its recommendation to the Executive Board on the membership of the ALA Nominating Committee for the 2018 Election, and this was approved at the Fall Executive Board meeting.

The Committee on Committees finalized its work on the selection of candidates for election to the Executive Board. There are six candidates for three vacancies on the Board. They will be presented at Midwinter in Atlanta, and the election by Council will proceed. The Committee on Committees will be working in March/April on the nominations for the 2017-18 Committee on Committees and the 2017-18 Planning and Budget Assembly, with the elections taking place at 2017 Annual Conference.

Planning

As candidate for ALA President, I advanced the following vision: We Dare...to be Bold, Courageous and Challenging. We are Virtual, engaged with our users and with our communities in ever more rigorous and effective ways. We are Virtuoso, smart but always ready to learn. We are Virtuous, radically collaborative, focused on a powerful set of core values, and always working in the public interest. The vitality and impact of our Association, our profession, and our libraries will require a powerful collective commitment to action and transformation. Now is the time for an outward view, and not an inward focus.

There will be several key “internal” priorities which will be important during my term as President:

- recruitment, appointment and orientation of a new executive director, as well as several other key director positions at ALA

- implementation of important changes in annual conference programming and meeting schedules
- expanded investment in the information technology infrastructure and systems
- implementation of a unified and coordinated professional education program
- improvements in communication and coordination among ALA and its chapters
- improvements in communication and coordination among ALA and its divisions
- review of the ALA publishing program after appointment of new director
- expanded capabilities for virtual participation in the work of the Association
- accreditation of library education programs, with reports on Process and Communication, and on Context of Future Accreditation
- Center for the Future of Libraries, as think tank and laboratory for innovation
- fundraising program, in particular annual campaign and planned giving
- member engagement and participation

My overarching theme for “external” initiatives will be LIBRARIES TRANSFORM: LIBRARIES LEAD:

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: advancing the work of the Task Force, establishing equity, diversity and inclusion as an ALA strategic initiative, focusing on outreach and pipeline development in high schools and colleges, expanding support for scholarship programs like Spectrum, creation of resident positions through the new Diversity Alliance, expanding financial support for attendance and participation at Midwinter and Annual Conference, and new leadership development opportunities.
- Leadership Development Programs: evaluate, expand and improve the wide range of leadership development programs across the Association, and strengthen professional leadership in our institutions and organizations, in our communities, in our profession and the Association, and in our nation and our world.
- Advocacy for Library Support and for Key Information Policies: we must be prepared to fight for the sustenance and growth in funding support for library programs at the national, state and local levels, and to advance information policies so important to our users (i.e. net neutrality, fair use, open government, privacy, confidentiality, equity of access). This means we must have the knowledge, skills, and chutzpah to aggressively reach out to and influence elected and government officials, and congressional staffs. This means we must forge radical partnerships with the first amendment, civil rights, social justice, and technology communities.
- Partnerships and Working Relationships with Important Organizations in the Library Field: ALA must build expanded and more robust collaboration with the Library of Congress, national

libraries, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, OCLC, National Archives, Digital Public Library of America to advance our shared interests and clout, and to develop cooperative programs and activities.

- School Libraries: We must embrace as a library community advocacy for school libraries as foundational to the health of our work to prepare students who are college and career ready. We must fight the closing of school libraries, the reductions in professional staffing, and the erosion of budgets. With weakened school libraries, we create a nation that is not able to locate and evaluate information that is accurate and balanced. Knowledge literacy is fundamental.

Participation

Over the past six months, I have attended several professional conferences and meetings, and have made several presentations:

- The IFLA Congress in Columbus, Ohio, in August 2016, including service on the Standing Committee on Academic and Research Libraries and on the Committee on Copyright and Other Legal Matters
- Recognition at IFLA with the Scroll of Appreciation for “distinguished service to copyright and legal matters, and outstanding contribution to fundraising to assist librarians from around the world to attend IFLA Congresses.”
- “Born-Digital Content: A Threatened Species Crying Out for Our Collective Commitment,” IFLA, Columbus, Ohio, 15 August 2016.
- “Do Academic Libraries Matter? Making the Case for Essential and Vital,” IFLA, Columbus, Ohio, 18 August 2016.
- Virtuality/Virtuosity/Virtuousness: Do Students and Researchers Still Need Libraries?” Thomas Endowed Lecture, Washington University in St. Louis, 4 October 2016.
- “The Challenges of Born-Digital Content in the Development of Global Collections,” China/US Conference on the Future of Academic Libraries, Harvard University, 13 October 2016.
- ALA Executive Board, Fall Meetings, 20-23 October, 2016.
- “Libraries as Convener, Distributor, Advocate and Archive in the Future Knowledge Economy,” Charleston Conference, Charleston, South Carolina, 3 November 2016.
- Meeting with Library of Congress, National Libraries, National Archives, Other Library Professional Associations to Explore Expanded Communication and Collaboration, Washington, DC, 18 November 2016.
- “Here Comes Everybody: Spotlighting the Values of Libraries” (panel member), Internet Association, Washington, DC, 18 November 2016.

- Meeting at the Library of Congress with Members of Library Copyright Alliance to Discuss Future of the Copyright Office, 22 November 2016.
- I Love My Librarian Award Ceremony and Reception, New York, 30 November 2016.
- Metropolitan New York Library Council Annual Conference, 11 January 2017.
- I continue to serve as the Chair of the 2017 ACRL National Conference in Baltimore in March 2017.

I am consulting with the Advocacy Office, Chapter Relations Office, and International Relations Office on future opportunities to represent ALA at meetings and on conference programs. Over the next several months, I will be speaking at and attending: Australian Library and Information Association Conference in Sydney, Library Journal/School Library Journal in New York, Council on East Asia Libraries Conference in Toronto, Harvard Library Leadership in a Digital Age Conference in Cambridge, Alabama Library Association, Association of Jesuit College and University Libraries Conference in Scranton, ALA Legislative Day in Washington, Massachusetts Library Association.

In addition, I have launched an initiative to visit public, school and academic libraries across the US to learn about their programs and to meet with library staffs. I launched this effort with a visit on January 4 to the Grinton Will Library of Yonkers Public Library.