

WHO ARE WE?

ALA's Governance & the ALA Network

We Are Mission

From our founding....

ALA Constitution, Article II: The object of the American Library Association shall be to promote library service and librarianship.

... to our present mission statement

Mission (ALA Policy A1.2)

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.**

We Are the People Who Fulfill ALA's Mission

- We are over 57,000* members in all U.S. states and territories and 94 other countries, organized in 11 Divisions and 20 Round Tables ... and a host of less formal groups (*including personal, organizational, corporate)
- We are 270 staff in 4 locations

..... *And also.....*

- We are 57 ALA Chapters, with more than 48,000 members collectively, many of whom are not ALA members – plus AASL Affiliates and ACRL Chapters, which also frequently represent individuals who are not part of ALA or ALA Chapters.
- We are 45 Library Champions
- We are more than 27 ALA-affiliated organizations, with thousands more members, representing a profession that intersects with many fields.

We Have Defined Broad Strategies to Fulfill That Mission

- ADVOCACY
- EQUITY-DIVERSITY-INCLUSION
- INFORMATION POLICY
- PROFESSIONAL & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The American Library Association recognizes that equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) impacts all aspects of work among members of the Association, within the field of librarianship, and within the communities served by libraries. This work includes addressing, dismantling, and transforming policies, structure and biases throughout the organization and the field of librarianship. ALA, through its actions and those of its members, is instrumental in creating a more equitable, diverse and inclusive society .

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.**

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.

Our Actions Reflect Our Values

The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values, which define, inform, and guide all professional practice. These values reflect the history and ongoing development of the profession and have been advanced, expanded, and refined by numerous policy statements of the American Library Association. Among these are:

Access
Confidentiality/Privacy
Democracy
Diversity
Education and Lifelong Learning
Intellectual Freedom
Preservation
The Public Good
Professionalism
Service
Social Responsibility

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to express our values more eloquently than ALA already has in the Freedom to Read statement, the Library Bill of Rights, the ALA Mission Statement, Libraries: An American Value, and other documents. They are interpreted, revised, or expanded when necessary. Over time, the values embodied in these statements have been embraced by the majority of librarians as the foundation of their practice.

We Are a Unique Type of Organization: An Association

An association is a voluntary organization of persons (or organizations) with common interests and ends, coming together informally or formally, to achieve together things they could not achieve – or could not achieve as well – individually.

ALA is formally established, legally incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mission + Members + Formal Structure

A Massachusetts Corporation

Charter of 1879 (rev. 1942): “Be it known, whereas [names] have associated themselves with the intention of forming a corporation under the name of the American Library Association for the purpose of promoting [the] library interests [of the country] *throughout the world* by exchanging views, reaching conclusions, and inducing cooperation in all departments of bibliothecal science and economy; by disposing the public mind to the founding and improving of libraries; and *by cultivating good will among its members, and by such other means as may be authorized from time to time by the Executive Board of the American Library Association*, and have complied with the provisions of the statutes of this Commonwealth in such case made and provided...” Note: in 1942, words in [] were deleted and italicized words added. The modification was approved by the Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, February 6, 1942.

Associations Have Characterized the United States

- Alex De Tocqueville, Democracy in America (1835-1840)

“Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations....If it be proposed to inculcate some truth, or to foster some feeling by the encouragement of great examples, they form a society”

Why? Why an Association?

- Sustained Effort – Associations are constructed for persistence of memory, mission and effort over time.
- Context – Associations are about the individual (even individual organization) in the context of the collective, in the context of time, in the context of change.
- Concepts – Associations are about shared concepts developed in the tug and pull of diverse perspectives and opposing viewpoints.
- Relationships – Associations are about relationships – between individuals, between groups, between concepts.
- And, Associations are about Active Citizenship and Organic Community.

Being an Active Citizen

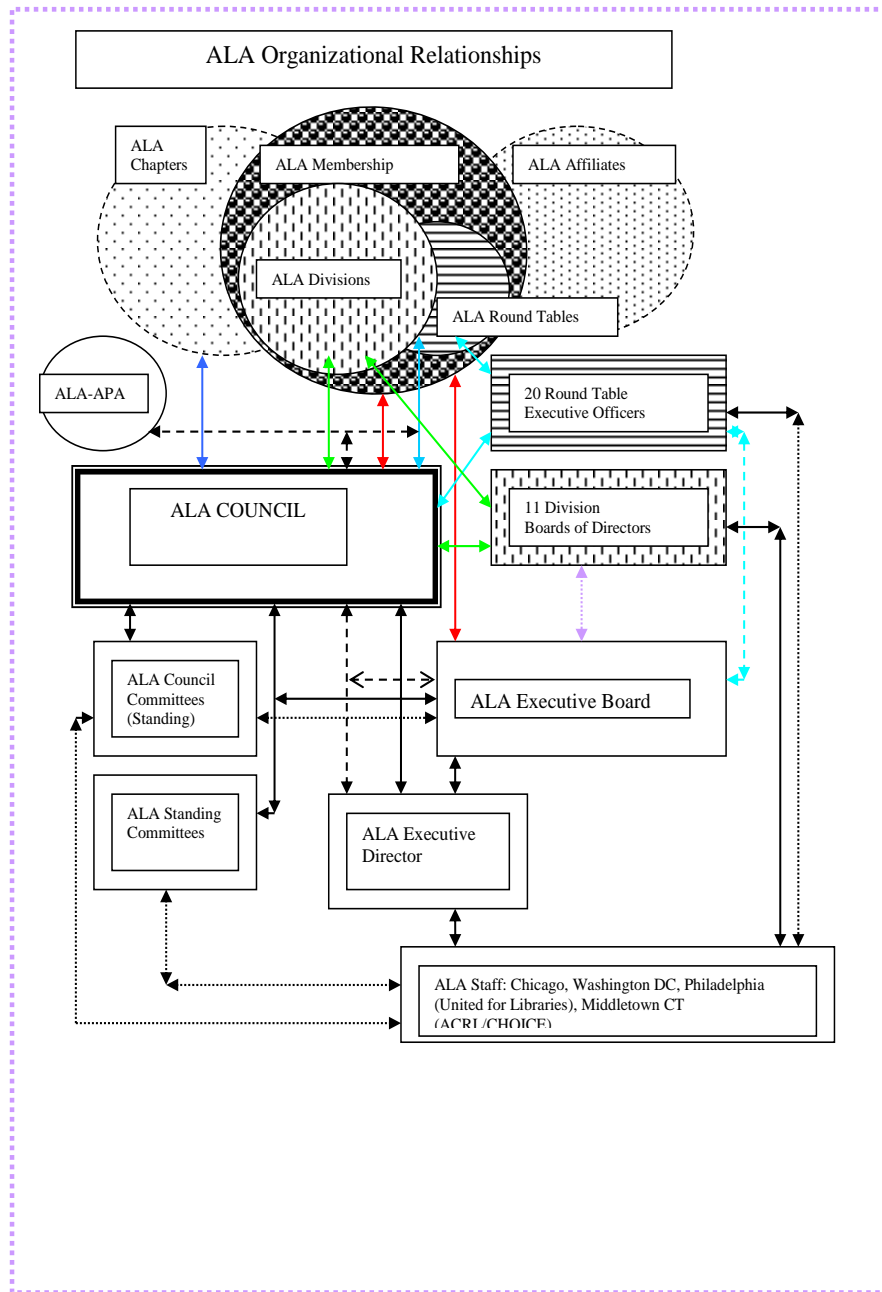
“To be a citizen is to show up – to accept the invitation to participate, or to create it if it is not offered, to act as a co-designer....I am responsible for the health of the institution and the community even though I do not control it. I can participate in creating something I do not control.”

Peter Block, *The Answer to How is Yes*

Let's start with relationships – and let's do that by using a model.

Why a model?

- Perspective
- Context
- Relationships and Confluence
- Focus – on specific aspects of a complex problem or set of relationships



This organizational relationships diagram shows a top-level view of the Association and its components, with the ALA Council at the center. Members are elected to Council by ALA members, and from ALA divisions and round tables, whose members must first be ALA members. Councilors, who must be ALA members, are also elected by ALA Chapters, whose members are not required to be ALA members. ALA members also elect the president-elect and treasurer who, along with the ALA executive director and ALA president, are officers of the Association. The Executive Board includes the officers, the immediate past president and eight Board members elected by Council from its membership. The diagram illustrates the relationship between Council and the Executive Board, and between Council and the Division Boards of Directors. These are not the only relationships within ALA's complex association ecosystem; they are the top-level relationships most frequently encountered by ALA member leaders. See ALA Organizational Relationships – Notes.

Membership

So, first of all, Council is elected by Members.

ALA membership is open to “any person, library, or other organization **interested in** library service and librarianship...upon payment of the dues provided for in the Bylaws.” [ALA Constitution, Article III]

Only **personal members** of the Association may hold office or (with specific exceptions) be appointed to committees.

Only members of the Association may be members of an ALA Division or Round Table.

Council in the ALA model: Policy-making

The Council of the American Library Association shall be the governing body of the Association....” [ALA Constitution, Article VI]

- Only ALA members may serve on Council, including representatives of ALA Chapters.
- All personal members of the Association are eligible for nomination to Council.
- The ALA president, president-elect and executive director serve as officers of Council; the executive director serves as its secretary.
- Each ALA Chapter is represented on Council.
- Each ALA Division is represented on Council.
- Each Round Table with membership equal to or greater than 1% of ALA personal membership is represented on Council.
- There are 100 at-large Councilors elected by ALA membership.

See also: ALA Bylaws Article IV and ALA Policy A.4.2, previously Policy 5.

The ALA Executive Board and Management

- “The Executive Board shall act for the Council in the administration of established policies and programs. The Executive Board shall be the body which manages within this context the affairs of the Association, but shall delegate management of the day-to-day operation to the Association’s Executive Director....” [ALA Constitution, Article VII] The ALA Executive Board consists of the officers of the Association, immediate past president and members selected by Council from among the members of Council. The officers of the Association are the president, president-elect, treasurer and executive director. All members of the Executive Board are automatically members of Council. [ALA Constitution, Article VIII] The ALA president-elect (president, immediate past-president) and treasurer are elected by the ALA membership. [See also ALA Policy A.4.1, previously 5.1]

... and Committees

“Standing committees may be committees of the Association or committees of Council....” [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII]. “Only personal members of the Association shall be appointed to committees except by authorization of the Executive Board.” [ALA Constitution, Article VIII]

Committees of the Association and Committees of Council differ primarily in the method of appointment. Committees are not authorized to speak for the Association. [See also ALA Policy Manual, A.4.3.6]

Within the ALA Membership Circle: Divisions and Round Tables

- “The Council may authorize the organization of a division of any group of not less than 500 members of the Association who are interested in the same field of librarianship.... The purpose of a division is to promote library service and librarianship within and for a particular type of library or as it relates to a particular type of library activity, and to cooperate in the promotion of general and joint enterprises within the Association and with other library groups....A division shall have authority to act for the ALA as a whole on any matter determined by Council to be the responsibility of the division....” [ALA Bylaws, Article VII] Each Division...”has a separate Board of Directors, elected by its members, and responsible to ALA Council.” [See also ALA Policy A.4.3.4.1, previously 6.4.1]
- “The Council may authorize the organization as a round table of any group of not less than 100 members of the Association who are interested in the same field of librarianship not within the scope of any division....” [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII] Round Tables are not authorized to speak for the association but may recommend policies to Council. [See ALA Policy A.3.3, previously 6.3]

Overlapping Memberships: ALA Chapters and Affiliates

- Chapters -- ALA Council may establish a chapter or any “legally constituted state, provincial, territorial, or regional library association may...be designated a chapter... provided the membership of the association applying for chapter status has expressed approval of the application and providing a majority of the ALA members residing in the area involved voting on the issue is in favor of such action....” No more than one ALA chapter may exist in any state, region or province. “Each chapter...shall be the final authority within the [ALA] in respect to all programs and policies which concern **only** the area for which the chapter is responsible, provided they are not inconsistent with any program or policies established by the ALA Council.” [ALA Bylaws, Article V. See also ALA Policy 4.3.1, previously 6.1]
- Affiliated Organizations – “The Council may by vote affiliate with the American Library Association or with any subdivision thereof upon its request, any national or international organization having purposes similar to those of the Association or its subdivision.” [ALA Constitution, Article X. See also ALA Policy A.10, previously Policy 9.]

And then, there's ALA-APA

To enable activities not possible or not possible to any significant extent within ALA's specific tax-exempt category [501(c)(3)], the ALA Council established a separately-incorporated professional association, the ALA-Allied Professional Association, or ALA-APA. ALA-APA is incorporated in the State of Illinois, unlike ALA, which is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. ALA-APA is tax-exempt as a 501(c)(6) organization. ALA-APA is governed by a Council and Board of Directors whose members are those individuals concurrently serving as members of the ALA Council and ALA Executive Board. The ALA Executive Director serves concurrently as the Executive Director of ALA-APA.

Relationships and Complexity

The design concept of “affordance” is useful here. Each part of the complex ALA ecosystem – both the parts of ALA itself and related, external entities – has unique “affordances” or qualities that can suggest to ALA leaders how they can be most effectively used.

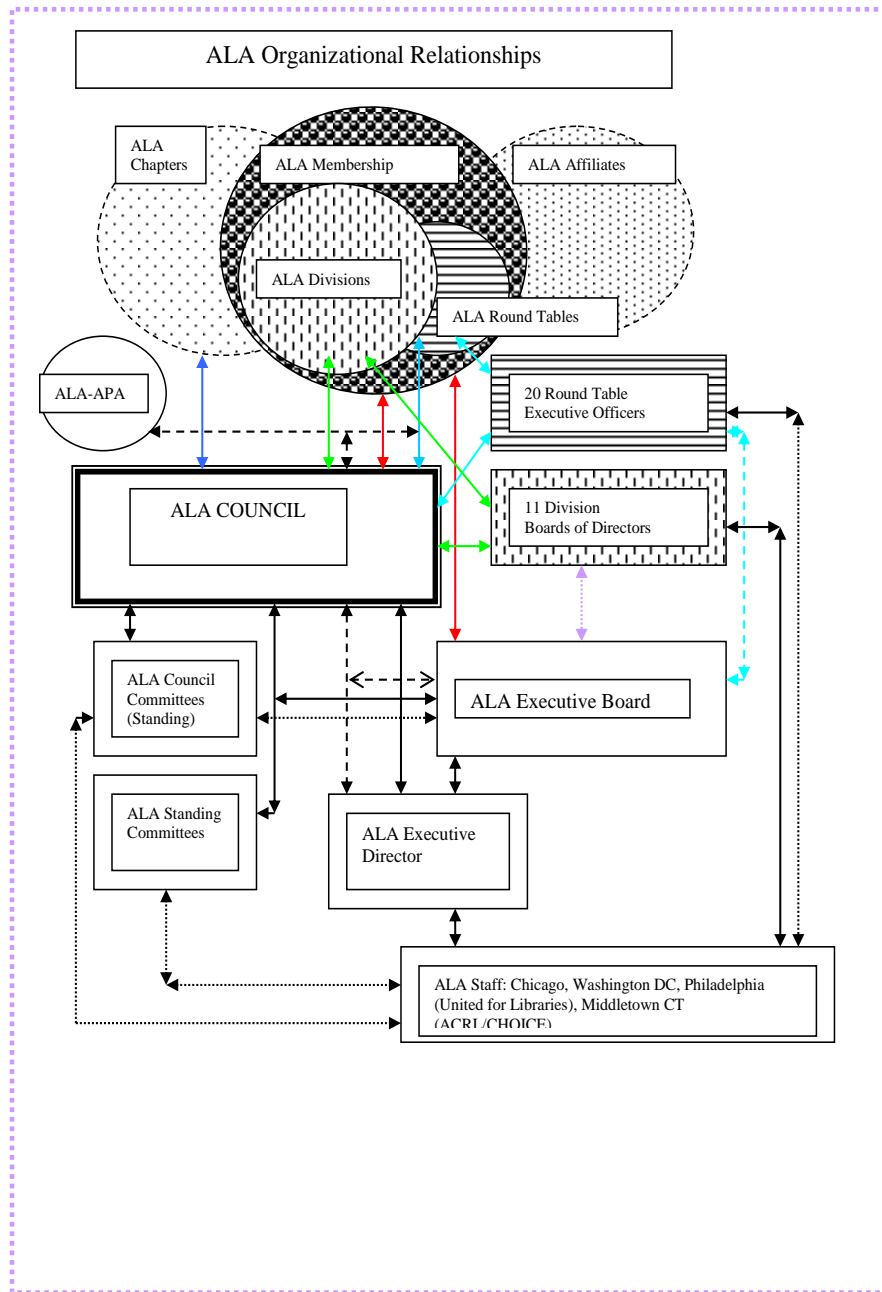
It is often helpful to think about the “affordances” of each of the component parts in this model. Then, think about the mechanisms that each has for impacting the others – through election, representation, resolution. Those mechanisms can be seen as “levers” to help move work through the Association.

- ❖ Division, Round Table and Chapter representatives move issues or concerns from their respective groups to the Council for discussion, debate and appropriate action.
- ❖ Divisions and sometimes Round Tables may appoint representatives or liaisons to a ALA committees or related assemblies.
- ❖ Council elects representatives to the ALA Planning and Budget Assembly (PBA) –which also includes representatives from Divisions, Round Tables and ALA Committees

Once you begin to think of an association – including ALA – as a complex mechanism for accomplishing a mission, you begin to look for levers, influence points, connections.

Or, look at the other reasons for an association

- Take a “long horizon” look at the affordances of the ALA ecosystem. Big changes often take years to achieve and the capacity to sustain through setbacks. So what are ALA’s persistence assets?
 - ❖ Legal structure and standing
 - ❖ Governance and decision-making structures
 - ❖ Physical and virtual presence
 - ❖ Processes and procedures that enable coordination of action – over and over
 - ❖ Financial assets
 - ❖ Reputation
 - ❖ Programs and publications to build coherence
 - ❖ Institutional memory
- Or, take a look at the ALA model and consider “advocacy math”
 - ❖ Go back to the numbers on slide 4 and think about them from the perspective of a particular issue. Think about the issue from the perspective of divisions, round tables, chapters, affiliates.
 - ❖ Part of what makes an association potentially powerful is each one of us – thinking and working with all of us in mind. Think of yourself and each ALA colleague at the center of their own network.



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ALA AS NETWORK

Go back to our ALA diagram. And let's look again –

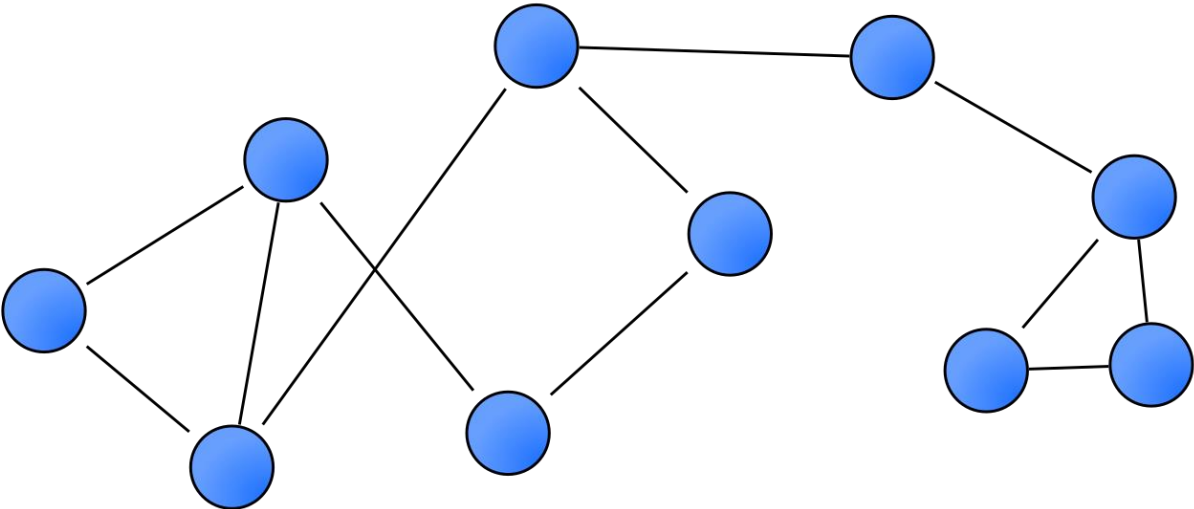
Think about ALA as an expansive set of nested and connecting networks.

- ❖ Look at Council membership – particularly but not only organizational or chapter representatives – as connections to other groups internal or external to ALA, each with their own governance, committees and action groups.

Networks

● Individual

Part of what makes an association potentially so powerful is **each one of us** – thinking and working **with all of us in mind**.



Think of yourself and each ALA colleague at the center of a network –

A final side-note:

“The more fully we believe a model is reality, the more rigid the model becomes. And the more rigid it becomes, the more it confines us. There is a sense of security in this, the sense of security that comes from being contained by the “known” and thus shielded from the threat of the unknown. So the mixed blessing of models is that while they can generate a sense of coherence through groundedness (in “knowledge”), they can also, if used without mindfulness, become addicting anesthetics to the pain of an inscrutable universe and further insulate us from full reality, which is the realm of infinite possibilities.”

Gordon MacKenzie, *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*

Closing – for now...

So, have a successful Council term – full of challenges met, expanded networks, innovative ideas explored and advanced.

While you're doing that, keep some questions in the background:

- How could we do this better – **together**?
- How might we organize **today** to achieve our mission?
- How do we know when we're achieving our mission? What does **progress** look like?

Contact information

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I'm happy to hear from you – questions, ideas, successes to be shared.