

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** ACRL 2017 Conference Relocation

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Board of Directors has approved ACRL officially withdrawing its intent to host their 2017 conference in Nashville and has authorized the staff to choose either Charlotte or Baltimore as the replacement city after site visits have been conducted. The reason for this change is that the hotel rates in the Nashville have drastically inflated after the addition of the new convention center. The number of hotel rooms available in the city has not kept up with demand. Because the demand for hotel rooms currently exceeds the supply, rates have escalated to the point where we feel the hotel costs would be a burden to our members and a deterrent to conference attendance. The ALA attorney has reviewed our letter of intent and confirmed ACRL can withdraw without financial penalty.

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**

Trevor A. Dawes, ACRL President  
Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL Executive Director

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL Executive Director  
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**DRAFT OF MOTION:**

1. That the ALA Board of Directors approve ACRL canceling its letter of intent to hold ACRL 2017 in Nashville.
2. That the ALA Board of Directors approve selection of either Baltimore or Charlotte as the host city for the ACRL 2017 conference and authorize staff to make the final selection after site visits can be conducted, the most attractive overall package and terms are determined, and letters of support obtained from the ALA and ACRL chapters contiguous to the site.

**DATE:** December 10, 2013

**BACKGROUND:**

The ALA and ACRL Boards approved Nashville as the 2017 conference destination in 2009. At the time, Nashville was about to begin building a new convention center right in the heart of downtown as well as various new hotels surrounding the convention center. The city offered

ACRL a waiver on convention center rental (a \$62,000 value) for being one of its first customers along with promising competitive hotel room rates and attractive venues for its social functions. The authentic culture of Music City seemed like it would appeal to our members and the city's financial incentives seemed to make it a wise choice for the ACRL 2017 Conference.

The newly opened convention center, new hotels and attractiveness of the city have recently made it a very popular destination. However, the number of hotel rooms available in the city has not kept up with demand. Because the demand for hotel rooms currently exceeds the supply, rates have escalated to the point where we feel the hotel costs would be a burden to our members and a deterrent to conference attendance. Currently there aren't enough hotel rooms surrounding the new convention center to meet the demand so the hotels are not offering the competitive rates that were expected. Even the typically more affordable brands (Best Western, Holiday Inn Express, etc.) would be at rates of \$190 and higher, which is more than ACRL conference attendees expect to pay. We also feel that these rates would disenfranchise a good segment of our attendance who needs to travel on a budget, especially our scholarship recipients.

For this reason we recommend officially withdrawing ACRL's intent to hold the conference in Nashville. The ALA attorney has reviewed our letter of intent and confirmed ACRL can withdraw without financial penalty.

Of course leaving Nashville means that ACRL needs another venue in which to hold its 2017 Conference. When negotiations with Nashville suggested that we would not be able to obtain the desired hotel rates, staff issued an RFP to identify other possible cities in the Eastern half of the country (the appropriate region for the 2017 rotation). Baltimore and Charlotte submitted the two strongest proposals with guaranteed 2017 hotel rates that are competitive with ACRL's hotel rate history. ACRL typically offers about 30% of our block in the lower – medium rate range (\$135 - \$179). Please see the charts below for ACRL rate history and comparison of 2017 rates available.

ACRL Hotel Rate History:

09 Seattle:	\$150 - \$194
11 Philadelphia:	\$179 - \$195
13 Indianapolis:	\$137 - \$175
15 Portland	\$139 - \$169

2017 Rates:

17 Nashville:	\$190 - \$238 (offers 0% in the lower- medium rate range of \$135 - \$179)
17 Baltimore:	\$155 - \$209 (offers 35% in the lower- medium rate range of \$135 - \$179)
17 Charlotte	\$149 - \$219 (offers 50% in the lower – medium rate range of \$135 - \$179)

Neither alternative city would interfere with ALA Annual or Midwinter Conferences in the surrounding years:

ALA 2016

Midwinter	Boston
Annual	Orlando

ALA 2017

Midwinter	Atlanta
Annual	Chicago

ALA 2018

Midwinter     Denver  
Annual         New Orleans

Both cities have been successful destinations for ACRL (Baltimore in 2007 and Charlotte in 2003) and we know they have sufficient facilities for our needs. Both convention centers are attractive and offer plenty of space for our exhibit hall, keynote, and breakout sessions. Both cities offer easy accessibility with a wide range of drive-in and over 600 flights per day. Both cities offer enough hotel rooms within walking distance to the center at guaranteed rates that are more in line with our previous history. Both cities offer nice venues for our social functions, each with their own unique benefits. Each of these cities is also currently holding meeting space and sleeping rooms over the dates of March 22 – 25, 2017 should we decide to withdrawal from Nashville.

Preliminary conversations with the chapter leadership of the ALA Maryland and North Carolina Chapters indicate support for hosting the ACRL 2017 conference in either location. Should the ALA Board approve the motions below, state chapters in Tennessee and the surrounding area will be notified of the withdrawal and support from surrounding state chapters of the replacement city will be obtained.

Because this change of venue puts ACRL behind schedule in terms of negotiating and finalizing contracts, staff would like to move quickly to secure a new location to ensure the best possible options and rates for the conference. Since the two cities recommended have both been used before, staff requests that the Board delegate to the staff the final selection based on the best overall package that the cities offer and the successfully securing of letters of support from the ALA chapters in the contiguous states..

**Attachments:** N/A