

A SHORT HISTORY OF UNITED FOR LIBRARIES

The first Division of the American Library Association was the American Library Trustees Association created in 1890. ALA was mindful of the important role that trustees played in the realm of the local public library. As ALA expanded and more specialty libraries were formed and new librarian positions created, so did the number of Divisions. The name of the trustee division was changed in 1999 to the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates reflecting a greater outreach in the community by library trustees.

In 1975, a project started under the ALA Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) to compile a directory of known Friends of Libraries groups in communities and campuses became the core of a separate organization: Friends of Libraries USA or FOLUSA.

In the summer of 2007, the Executive Director of ALTA resigned that position to take another position within the ALA family of Divisions. That summer a meeting was held with the Executive Director of ALA and the President and President-Elect of ALTA. They discussed a proposal brought forth by the Executive Director of FOLUSA to bring FOLUSA back under the ALA umbrella and combine these two advocate groups under one Division. Throughout the next year and one-half, many Town Meetings were held between the members of ALTA and FOLUSA to discuss what the new Division would look like and how it would continue to serve library advocates by bringing the citizens voice to all libraries with a united message.

On February 1, 2009, The Association of Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) through a vote of their membership and Friends of Libraries U.S.A. through a vote by their board became a united ALA Division of ALA known as the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations. Today, this Division has become known as United for Libraries once again demonstrating the power of these voices reaching out to supporters of libraries everywhere to become a real, united force to be reckoned with at the local, state and national levels.

United for Libraries will continue to build on the work and success of both ALTA and FOLUSA by bringing together the Trustees, Friends and Foundation members to work together to strengthen the positions of all through information, education, collaboration and cooperation. This Division continues to effectively promote and advocate for all libraries, encouraging the development of library Foundations and engaging corporate supporters to unite and strengthen all voices in support of libraries.

Sources: The New Voice for America's Libraries/A Rich History – United for Libraries Website

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