

ALA 2012
Midwinter, Dallas
WLA Councilor Report

This report should have been written three weeks ago, but I came home and was sick a week, plus a catch-up week, and finally time to write reports. It's a shame too, because I came back totally jazzed about the evolution in ALA that I've been watching and the sincerity of the national association leadership to guide all of us into the future.

First I can tell you how impressed I was with the candidates for ALA president. Both women are well qualified and articulate. I was tickled to see them sharing "candidate" duties as they moved from location to location. I don't think I've noticed that camaraderie in previous years. I had the opportunity to visit with Barbara Stripling, and Gina J. Millsap has been chairman of LLAMA (Library Leadership & Management) and a 2007 Mover & Shaker. I will tell you I admire both women, but I rather like the effort Barbara is making to continue the work and direction of Maureen Sullivan, Molly Raphael, and Camila Alire.

Besides the Council business meetings, I attended the conversational "Empowering Libraries: Transforming Communities" sessions. It was an interesting concept, pushing librarians outside their safe box to take a look at their communities. What do you see when you look at your community? What does your community aspire to be? What would you change? Then ask "how can your library participate?" Presenter David Lankes said "Expect more – of yourself, your colleagues, and your community." Lankes conclusion: "The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities." The Presidential Program featured Richard Howard who carried a similar message about the importance of libraries for communities. Wow. What a challenge for all of us.

The business of American Library Association can be found on-line with the written reports of ALA President Molly Raphael, President-Elect Maurine Sullivan, and Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels. It is a full time job for these chief executives as they pursue the association goals and strategic plans – all available on line. The Treasurer's report is equally critical. Election speeches, approving a slate of officers for the Executive Board, and petitions to run for the Council are part of midwinter. The process for meetings for councilors (me) and executive board members is repetitious. First we have an orientation, then an information session, followed by the three business meetings, and the additional forums – held after my bedtime, but sometimes exciting opportunities for getting to the meat of policy formation. Frankly, you need the repetition to listen to the discussions, comments, decision making process.

http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_actions/2012mw_annual_actions/actions_mw2012.pdf

One of the reports I liked best is the "implementation report" that Fiels used as the follow-up to last year's conference. It includes the steps taken by ALA staff to meet the goals of the association. It is direct and purposeful.

http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2011mw_council_docus/cd9_implementation_r.pdf

The ALA working group dealing with Digital Content and Libraries has continued its work, meeting with publishers after the Dallas meeting as well as before. Molly Raphael continues to explain the effort to develop a relationship and understanding between libraries and publishers as a major goal.

ALA Resolution on Publishers and Practices which Discriminate against Library Users was totally hashed over, with the ALA emphasis on depriving readers of content. (ALA CD @20.3)

Intellectual freedom issues, particularly the Tucson school dismantling of an ethnic studies program, were a hot topic too. This form of censorship was based on an interpretation of state law by the state department of education, and the ALA resolution urged Arizona to repeal that section of a state statute. (ALA CD #19 Resolution Opposing Restriction to Materials and Open Inquiry in Arizona Ethnic and Cultural Studies Programs)

The Committee on Legislation focused on Opposition to the Research Works Act, the PIPA (the Intellectual Property Act of 2011) and SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act). The open exchange of information as a guiding principal of the First Amendment and access to information and knowledge as an ALA commitment are the principals supporting the ALA stance to oppose legislation. (ALA CD #20.2) The Resolution Opposing the Research Works Act (ALA CD #20.1) urged the rejection of the act that limits legitimate research and supports open access to public records.

The Resolution on the Loss of Crucial Government Information (ALA CD#20.3) urges digital access of historical information, restoration of funding for permanent no-fee public access, and improvement of policy and process for government information.

Every single meeting reminded us to take time to vote in support of school library discussion. The argument was an Association with 60,000 members should be able to provide 25,000 signatures to open a discussion on the national level. It was a request to Congress to talk about the importance of school libraries for information and literacy goals. It worked. The petition earned the required signatures.

One of the nice things ALA consistently does is the recognitions and memorials for past and current members. This year a resolution honoring Lois Ann Gregory-Wood received a standing ovation. As an ALA staffer she "has been a vital force in keeping the Council goal-oriented and productive." But moreover, she has the good nature and caring attitude that keeps all of us working. Two people were nominated and approved for honorary membership: Senator Jack Reed, RI, and Dr. Betty J. Turock, NJ librarian. This too is a lovely process which seems to be working.

ALA Midwinter is a fast paced conference geared toward the committee and business functions of the Association. There were about 10,000 people there, a huge vendor show, and the powerful two day program on "Empowering Voices: Transforming Libraries. I saw four other Wyoming librarians in the mix -- and shared rides with them.

Thank you, WLA members, for allowing me to represent you on the national level. I recommend this job for anyone who enjoys "process," crowds, and travel. It is a fascinating glimpse into our profession, and I hope I have reciprocated by relaying information to you.

Patty Myers
WLA Representative to ALA

P.S. Just this week I have received about 20 emails from ALA Council members hashing over the "Booze for Books" fund raising effort supported by YALSA. Who knew! Comedy and seriousness all rapped up into fundraising. "Cocktails for Collections" for anyone?