

ALSC Division Councilor Report

Jenna Nemec-Loise

Spring 2018 Executive Committee Meeting

Councilor Activities Since 2018 Midwinter Meeting

Month	Activity
Ongoing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitored ALA Council listserv and read all posts. 2. Monitored Youth Council Caucus ALA Connect space and read all posts.
February	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attended 2018 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Denver and participated in the following: ALSC Executive Committee meeting; REFORMA/ALSC Joint Executive Committee meeting; ALSC Board meetings I and II; Leadership and ALSC; ALA Council sessions I, II, and III; ALA Council Fora sessions I, II, and III; and Youth Council Caucus. 2. Submitted memorial resolution for Julius Lester to ALA Council. 3. Drafted "How Time During Council Sessions Is Used" statement (see p. 3-4), which was read at Council III in Denver, posted to the ALA Council listserv, and shared with the ALSC Executive Committee via e-mail. 4. Wrote and submitted Midwinter 2018 Councilor report for publication in the February 2018 issue of <i>ALSC Matters!</i> 5. Via e-mail and Google Slides, collaborated with ALSC Fiscal Officer Paula Holmes on March ALSC Board Orientation presentation.
March	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued collaboration with ALSC Fiscal Officer Paula Holmes on March ALSC Board Orientation presentation. 2. Attended and presented at online ALSC Board Orientation. 3. Monitored the continued ALA Council listserv discussion about educational requirements for the ALA Executive Director position and upcoming ballot measure. 4. Via e-mail, notified ALSC Executive Committee members of ALA Council listserv conversation about revisiting procedures for the James Madison Award and its potential impact on the ALSC awards program. 5. Via e-mail, began collaboration with ALSC staff on April ALSC Community Forum, "Doing ALA Differently."
April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Via Zoom, attended Joint AASL/ALSC/YALSA Executive Board meeting to discuss advocacy and valuation efforts as well as "doing ALA differently." 2. Via e-mail, continued collaboration with ALSC staff on April ALSC Community Forum, "Doing ALA Differently." 3. Via e-mail, facilitated ALA Executive Board Liaison Andrew Pace's attendance at April ALSC Community Forum. 4. Via Adobe Connect, facilitated April ALSC Community Forum discussion on "Doing ALA Differently." 5. Prepared Councilor report for Spring 2018 Executive Committee Meeting.

Council Issues Since 2018 Midwinter Meeting

ALA Executive Director Educational Requirements. As in recent quarters, the majority of ALA Council listserv discussion since the 2018 Midwinter meeting concerned the educational requirements for the ALA Executive Director position. With the member petition seeking to reverse the Fall 2017 Council vote¹ on the Spring 2018 ballot, conversation once again intensified for two reasons:

1. **Confusing ballot language.** Many Councilors reported that the language of the ballot measure as initially written was confusing; therefore, members may have cast their votes incorrectly (i.e. without knowing what a **Yes** or **No** vote meant). Once the ballot language was clarified, e-mails went out to all eligible voters with instructions on how to correct their ballots if they chose to do so.
2. **Non-Council member statements.** Several Councilors posted statements on behalf of non-Council members who wanted to make their positions on the ALA ED educational requirements known. Many of these statements encouraged Councilors to vote one way or the other on the measure, which increased tension about the matter and renewed the controversy on the ALA Council listserv.

Rates of Voter Participation. Rates of voter participation also became a thorny issue during online Council discussions. While many members were hopeful that the ALA ED educational requirements measure would boost voting percentages, this did not seem to be the case. In fact, voting numbers appeared lower in 2018 than they did in 2017. Office of ALA Governance Director JoAnne Kempf provided regular voting updates to Council while polls were open, and as of April 1, total voter participation was at 18.82% compared to just over 20% in 2017.

James Madison Award. Many Council members took issue with the announcement that the 2018 James Madison Award² had been jointly given to U.S. Representatives Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Mike Quigley (D-IL). The Issa-Quigley announcement stated, "The co-founders of the Transparency Caucus have championed FOIA, the DATA Act and open government reforms." However, in a March 10 post to the ALA Council listserv, Councilor K.G. Schneider summarized objections to Issa's receipt of the award, citing "his opposition to net neutrality...and his co-sponsorship of an anti-open-access bill, the Research Works Act, introduced in late 2011." Many Councilors and ALA members wanted to know how Issa could have received this award given prior actions and positions that seem contradictory to ALA's core values.

After the 2018 announcement, ALA President Jim Neal looked into James Madison Award background, oversight, and administration: Unlike other ALA awards, no member committee or body has historically participated in the James Madison Award process. President Neal assured Council and ALA members that steps will be taken to align the James Madison Award process with other ALA awards and ensure member input. Questions about the James Madison Award prompted Council members to ask whether a greater look at ALA's entire awards portfolio—which includes ALSC awards—is warranted. As of the time of this writing, no further discussion has taken place on this topic via Council listserv.

Other Issues. Most other messages appearing on the Council listserv were announcements and updates, and few of these posts generated more than brief discussion among Council members.

¹ Council voted online to answer the question, "**Shall the educational qualification for the ALA Executive Director be amended to make an ALA-accredited Master's Degree or a CAEP-accredited Master's Degree with a specialty in school library media a preferred but not required educational qualification?**" The measure passed, with 77% of Council members voting yes; a 75% affirmative vote was needed for the motion to carry.

² Per award web page, the James Madison Award "is presented annually on the anniversary of [Madison's] birth to honor individuals or groups who have championed, protected and promoted public access to government information and the public's right to know at the national level."

How Time During Council Sessions Is Used

(delivered by ALSC Division Councilor Jenna Nemecek-Loise during Council III at MW 18)

This issue was raised at both Council Forum I and Council Forum II, but I want to recap the discussion for councilors and members of the audience who were unable to join us for those sessions.

I'm ever grateful for the rich discussions we have at conferences. I look forward to both Council meetings and Council forums so we can do our utmost to move the work of the association forward on behalf of our colleagues who elected us. However, I have significant concerns about the current structure of Council meetings and the way we use our time together: We may not be conducting our business in ways that are as effective, transparent, or inclusive as we believe them to be.

Council I here in Denver is a prime example. Perhaps due to rich discussion at Council forum on the previous evening, we concluded Council business quickly and bumped up our ALA-APA session by a full hour. Rather than waiting until the scheduled ALA-APA time of 10:30—a time posted in the scheduler for all Midwinter attendees should they choose to join us—we began at 9:30 a.m. and finished before 10. That's one full hour earlier than we were scheduled to conclude.

On one hand, this seems like a nice problem to have. Concluding business early means we can move on to other things, like visiting the Exhibits floor, networking with colleagues informally, getting coffee and a much-needed break, or running off to that other meeting because you can't be two places at once. And after all, who wants to extend meetings just to fill up time and say we did?

But what else can concluding our business early and outside of scheduled times mean for our membership at large? How does that look, and how may it be perceived by our ALA peers? Here are a few actual perceptions I've heard from non-Council members:

- Council is a “rubber stamp” body that operates at the pleasure of the Executive Board.
- Council brings up issues and votes on them without discussion that justifies decisions.
- Council discussions are secret and don't actually take place during meetings.
- Council is for councilors.
- After being invited by a Councilor, I went to sit in on a Council session and walked into an empty room.

What does this tell us? Two things, I think: (1) That what is perceived is; and (2) we can and should do better.

We owe it to the members we serve and to ourselves as councilors to examine our current practices and find new ways to demonstrate the purpose, value, and substance of what we do. That starts with making the most of Council meetings and creating opportunities for ALL members—councilors and non-councilors alike—to work, learn, and serve more efficiently, transparently, and inclusively.

Here are a few ideas about how to do so generated at Council Forum I, Council Forum II, and in conversations I've had with many councilors:

- **Stick to scheduled time slots.** If Council business concludes early, don't bump other sessions up. This would allow interested members to find us and engage with us as they would expect to do per the online scheduler.
- **Conduct the ALA-APA meeting prior to Council I.** If Council I ends early, there is no time gap.
- **Make the most of Council meeting time slots.** If Council business is concluded early, conduct break-out discussions on pre-arranged or spontaneous topics of relevance to ALA membership. These activities would engage Council and audience members in conversation and demonstrate councilors' commitment to maximizing our scheduled time working for the benefit of ALA and our membership.
- **Build on the success of yesterday's Council II meeting.** Rather than making time for break-out sessions only if Council ends early, be intentional about creating member engagement opportunities, adding at least one conversation to the Council agenda at each conference.
- **Move to suspend Roberts Rules of Order for discussion items.** Parliamentary procedure is vital when it comes to making motions, putting forward resolutions, and taking votes, and I'm grateful for that process. However, agreeing to speak more informally during discussion may help conversation evolve more naturally and provide broader entry points for those who are reluctant to speak under more formal constraints.
- **Move one Council forum to a morning time slot.** This slot could fill the time that remains if a Council session ends early, or it could be scheduled as a separate time slot immediately following a Council session. Since not all councilors are able to attend evening forums, having a morning option may increase forum attendance, engage a broader community, and minimize the perception that Council conducts business or conversation in secret.
- **Duplicate Council Forum discussions on the Council floor.** This is perhaps the most critical area where each and every one of us can improve immediately. Let's say what we say in forum during Council I, II, and III. Not only will duplicating our discussions on the Council floor make them a matter of record, we could also minimize the feelings of disenfranchisement many of our councilors and non-councilors feel when they are unable to attend forum sessions. (And I echo the thanks to LITA Councilor Aaron Dobbs for recording our forum notes and making sure they're posted for everyone.)

If we are to evolve ALA and improve our organizational effectiveness, we as Council must model what that looks like now. If time allows this morning, I ask our Council colleagues to join me in discussing the issue of how Council uses time during conference meetings. Please repeat all the feedback, ideas, and questions you shared during Council Forum I and Council Forum II here in Denver. If time does not allow, let's continue the conversation on the Council listserv.

Lastly, I extend my deep thanks to ALA President Jim Neal for his immediate attention to the issues I've raised here when I expressed them after Council I and for taking swift action at this Midwinter Meeting to make Council sessions more effective, transparent, and inclusive.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.