

**American Library Association  
Annual Conference 2014  
Report of President, Barbara Stripling**

**Projects and Initiatives**

**Libraries Change Lives**

Throughout my presidential year, I have focused on the theme of “Libraries Change Lives” in order to highlight the transformative practices of libraries of all types in three areas: literacy, innovation, and community engagement. In my conversations and library visits, I have discovered an inspiring array of programs and services that connect libraries to their communities and answer community needs and priorities. Much of this work has been featured through the work of my advisory committee, co-chaired by Patty Wong and Maribel Castro. A yearlong series of webinars was coordinated by Sue Considine, with support from the Office for Library Advocacy.

*Literacy*

The dialogue and positioning of libraries as important components of the e-book world continued under the auspices of ALA leadership and the Digital Content and Libraries Working Group (DCWG), co-chaired by Bob Wolven and Sari Feldman. Although all of the Big 5 publishers are now selling e-books to libraries, the terms and pricing are still not equitable and fair, so the dialogue must continue. The DCWG Task Force has been renewed for an additional two years and the membership is currently being formed. DCWG will add other areas of focus to its charge: consortium purchasing and sharing; preservation; accessibility; and e-books in school and academic libraries.

A new ALA director of literacy will enable ALA to connect and highlight the myriad literacy efforts that are being conducted throughout the divisions, committees, roundtables, and other units of ALA. Through a web-based portal approach, ALA will be able to present a public face of literacy and to demonstrate that libraries are powerful forces for literacy in our communities.

*Innovation*

Libraries across the country are trying innovative practices that are changing the nature of library programs and services. This year, I focused on two practices that are gathering momentum in libraries: makerspaces and the hosting of TED and TEDx talks.

Makerspaces have continued to be defined in locally appropriate ways and to blossom in public, academic, and school libraries. These spaces offer the opportunity for active learning, invention, sharing of expertise, collaboration, and use of technology by community members of all ages. Young children are inventing new animals with Legos and conducting science experiments. Teens are creating videos and digital stories, writing and performing poetry, and learning about robotics, science, and artistic

expression. Adults are turning to innovation spaces in their libraries to develop small businesses, learn how to knit, and create an array of useful and inventive products using a 3D printer. Makerspaces have been highlighted this year in a number of my interviews with journalists, through a series of ALA webinars, at ALA conferences, and in a Maker Faire hosted by the White House.

Libraries are increasingly becoming host sites for TED talks and TEDx events. To foster continued expansion of the library TED network, we offered a special session at Midwinter and another will be offered at Annual. TED talks were also the subject of an ALA webinar this year.

### *Community Engagement*

The final strand of *Libraries Change Lives*, community engagement, is designed to sustain and amplify ALA's community engagement focus from the last several years. ALA's two-year project, *The Promise of Libraries in Transforming Communities*, funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and developed in collaboration with the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, is well under way. A new cohort of 10 libraries has been selected to receive intensive training, 18 months of monthly coaching and peer dialogue, and continued access to distance learning sessions to enable the libraries to "turn outward" to their communities and engage with their communities in new ways. The project is designed to strengthen librarians as community leaders and change agents and strengthen ALA's capacity as a lead library support entity. The new tools, resources, and support mechanisms developed through this grant will benefit all types of libraries.

### **Declaration for the Right to Libraries**

The *Declaration for the Right to Libraries* was designed to build the public will to stand up for strong libraries. State coordinators across the country facilitated state and local campaigns to engage communities in conversations about the values and impact of libraries; conduct signing ceremonies with community members of all ages; use the *Declaration* as the basis for legislative and policy-making advocacy; enlist the support of authors, public officials, business leaders, administrators, boards, young people, adults, mayors, governors, and legislators for strong public, academic, special, and school libraries; and even develop public support for millage increases. More than 100,000 people signed the *Declaration* in the official count, with countless more signing in local ceremonies that were not submitted to the OLA Office. A webinar on June 9 featured four librarians who offered strong examples of *Declaration* use: Alabama (Jeff Simpson); Arkansas (Hadi Dudley); Lincoln, Nebraska (Mary Reiman); and the Redford Library in Michigan (Lisa Hoenig).

An excerpt from the state report prepared by Hadi Dudley, director of the Bentonville Public Library and state coordinator for Arkansas, illustrates the power of the *Declaration*:

***Delight Branch Library***, a "one-person library" which usually records 135 library visitors during the week, gathered 69 signatures on Valentine's Day. The town's population is 278, so the 25% rate of participation by local citizens is fantastic! According to Miss Ginny Evans, "it was a celebratory 'open house' to enroll new patrons and appreciate the community's support for our library. In the last year, the town lost our high school (to consolidation) and the grammar school will consolidate next year, so we are losing it too. Now, more than ever, our library plays a big

*part in our town's educational opportunities." Miss Ginny continues, "We value our community's support and plan to use the Libraries Change Lives as an annual celebration... for as long as I'm here, anyway. I'm 73 years old, so I figure I have 15 more years, at least!"*

Due to overwhelming interest, the *Declaration* will continue to be used by libraries in their advocacy and community engagement efforts and continue to be available on the ALA website (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/declaration-right-libraries>) and the ILoveLibraries.org website (<http://www.ilovelibraries.org/declaration/sign>) for downloading and online signature. Also available online are support resources and a toolkit. The Office for Library Advocacy will continue to assist members as needed and asks that librarians contact the Office with details about their use of the *Declaration*.

### **Leadership Development**

The second cohort of librarians has been selected to participate in the ALA Leadership Institute: Leading to the Future. This leadership initiative was launched as a presidential initiative in 2013 by Maureen Sullivan. This year's four-day immersive institute will be supported by a grant from Innovative Interfaces and will again be facilitated by ALA Past-President Maureen Sullivan and ACRL Content Strategist Kathryn Deiss. The curriculum focuses on leading in turbulent times, interpersonal competence, power and influence, the art of convening groups, and creating a culture of inclusion, innovation, and transformation. Training for the second cohort of approximately 40 librarians will be held in August.

### **Summit on the Future of Libraries**

A national summit, *Libraries From Now On: Imagining the Future*, was held in May 2014 in Washington, DC. Co-chairs Julie Todaro and Pat Smith, Coordinator Nancy Bolt, and Facilitator Paula Singer planned and ably implemented the 1 ½ day summit that involved 80 participants from the library world and the connected public world.

The two day summit focused on the following questions:

- How do we think differently about libraries and library services?
- What are the societal, technological, and educational trends that will influence and shape the communities and society that libraries of all types serve?
- What do these trends mean for libraries of all types in light of our values as educators, librarians, and community members?
- How can we build public will to help achieve a better future based on these values?

Participants were challenged with remarks by four speakers from outside of the library world: author and journalist, Stephen Dubner; Lincoln Professor of Law, Culture, and Values at Arizona State University, Joel Garreau; Chancellor and President of the University of Houston, Dr. Renu Khator; and Executive Director and Senior Futurist at the DaVinci Institute, Thomas Frey. Participants followed each presentation with table conversations to explore the ideas and think about the implications for libraries.

Library Futurist Joan Frye Williams synthesized and summarized the rich dialogue to conclude the summit.

The Summit outcomes will help shape the thinking related to ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries and provide a foundation for ALA's development of strategic directions. Reflections on the Summit will be shared by a panel at Annual Conference featuring participants Pearl Li, Carolyn Foote, Corinne Hill, and Miguel Figueroa.

### **Center for the Future of Libraries**

ALA has established a Center for the Future of Libraries, funded in part by IMLS, to position ALA and libraries of all types as leaders in re-imagining libraries to provide the greatest impact for our communities. The goals of the Center are to: help libraries identify emerging trends; provoke discussion on how to shape the future; build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries tackle these issues; provide a forum to share ideas and explore joint solutions to the challenges facing society; develop new mechanisms for the exchange of innovative practices; and provide an association-wide "incubator" for experimentation. The new director of the Center is Miguel Figueroa.

### **Advocacy for School Libraries**

ALA continues to focus on the critical situation of school libraries across the country, using multiple approaches. A school library advocacy campaign has been launched through the planning of the school library task force and the Committee on Library Advocacy. An adaptation of the *Declaration*, the *Declaration for the Right to School Libraries*, was developed; it was used by school librarians to engender active support from parents, teachers, students, administrators, and community members during School Media Month. I have been actively engaged throughout the year in advocating for school libraries to journalists, speaking to librarians, and writing columns and op-eds on school library issues. AASL has received funding from IMLS to support research that will investigate the causal relationship between school libraries and student achievement.

I am optimistic about the impact of our continued advocacy for school libraries. Although the situation for school libraries is still threatening and unstable, it is turning around in some communities. It will take a unified effort of all types of librarians and the commitment of the entire ecosystem of libraries to have the depth of impact we hope to see.

### **Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

I have established a Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to develop a plan and strategic actions to build more equity, diversity, and inclusion among our members, the field of librarianship, and our communities. The most important Task Force outcome will be the public and honest conversation that will be generated by its plan and recommended actions.

The Task Force has been appointed for a term to last through Annual Conference 2016. The co-chairs are Trevor Dawes and Martin Garner; members were selected to represent various constituencies within ALA who have a vested interest in diversity and inclusion, including the ethnic affiliates, the Executive

Board/Council, ASCLA and the Accessibility Assembly, the Committee on Diversity and the Diversity Council, the Chapter Relations Committee, the Committee on Membership Meetings, GLBTRT, and SRRT.

The following areas provide a framework for the Task Force plan, with other ideas to be provided by the Task Force itself:

- 1) Develop programs and other opportunities for members to learn about and engage in the issue;
- 2) Build strong advocacy and awareness at ALA meetings and conferences;
- 3) Work in partnership with the ALA Committee on Diversity and the Office of Diversity to centralize and coordinate activities including a permanent online repository through ALA Connect in which a diversity and inclusion "toolkit" of resources and related materials can be housed and accessed by the membership at large.
- 4) Use the Orlando conference as a platform to provoke a national dialogue;
- 5) Collaborate with local Black and Hispanic/Latino community members and organizations in Orlando to determine the best ways for ALA members to be supportive of them. This will include compilation of a list of African-American and Hispanic/Latino businesses in Orlando for ALA members to patronize;
- 6) Develop communications directed toward the public;
- 7) Support efforts by ALA to reach out to national organizations with vested interest in fighting racism and all forms of discrimination and in increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our society, as reflected in ALA Policy on Diversity B.3 (e.g., NAACP, La Raza, Urban League);
- 8) Develop an assessment plan to measure the impact of Task Force efforts.

### **Strategic Directions for ALA**

As you know, ALA has been engaged in community conversations with our members over the past couple of years focused on re-imagining ALA. The ALA Executive Board has been developing plans to move the "re-imagining ALA" conversations forward into strategic action. We realize that any changes we make to our organization must be based on very careful assessment of member needs and wishes, because, although we serve three constituencies (members, libraries, and the public), we must primarily be responsive to members.

We started with large conversation sessions at our conferences, but broadened and deepened the dialogue to include insights from division and round table leadership, Council, focus groups, and a membership survey. The Executive Board and ALA staff accepted the challenge to analyze and synthesize these comprehensive conversations in order to develop a strategic framework that will guide our Association as we re-conceptualize our focus, structure, operations, and culture.

The Board has outlined three **strategic directions** that reflect the conversations with our members and member leaders and that will enable us to focus our Association's strategic efforts and create a "welcoming, inclusive, engaged and supportive organization" for our members:

- **Advocacy**
  - ALA shall advocate the public value of librarians, libraries and information services
- **Information Policy**

- ALA shall focus on a diverse set of policy areas that includes: intellectual freedom, privacy, civil liberties, telecommunications, funding for education and research programs, funding for libraries, copyright and licensing, government information, and literacy
- **Professional and Leadership Development**
  - ALA shall provide professional and leadership development of librarians and library workers that focuses on high-quality professional practice and the future of libraries and information services

### Media Activity

Media activity is one of the interesting aspects of the presidential year. Throughout the year, I have responded to requests for interviews from journalists from print publications, television, and radio. The interviews are coordinated by the Public Information Office and the Washington Office. The focus of the interviews has varied greatly, including public policy issues, e-books, makerspaces, the transformation of libraries, the human book, the impact of technology, school libraries, reading, the NSA and privacy, banned books, the digital divide and second-level digital divide, teen programming, the USA Freedom Act, network neutrality, the future of libraries and librarians, and the ecosystem of libraries. It’s been a wonderful learning experience as I prepare for each interview and respond to (and sometimes re-direct) the interview questions. I was surprised to discover that the op-eds that I wrote seemed to get more traction than my responses to interviews, probably because I was able to take a stand and provide solid evidence to back my assertions.

### Travel and Presentations

I have made the following presentations since January 2014.

| DATE         | EVENT/LOCATION   | RESPONSIBILITY/TOPIC                           |
|--------------|--|--|
| 2/27-3/2/14  | Alaska Library Association - Anchorage                   | Conference Endnote Speech                      |
| 3/12-3/13/14 | Public Library Association Conference – Indianapolis, IN | Welcome and Greetings from ALA                 |
| 3/14/14      | Southern Westchester BOCES – Scarsdale, NY               | Workshop on Primary Sources and Technology     |
| 3/15/14      | St. John’s Conference – Long Island, NY                  | Keynote  |
| 3/31-4/2/14  | Oklahoma Library Association Conference – Tulsa, OK      | ALA Forum Session; Legislative Luncheon Speech |
| 4/4/14       | Catholic University of America – Washington, DC          | Stone Lecture                                  |
| 4/9-4/10/14  | Texas Library Association                                | Greetings from ALA; Workshop                   |

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|               | Conference – San Antonio, TX   |  |
| 4/11-4/13/14  | ALA Executive Board Spring Meeting – Chicago, IL                                       | Presiding  |
| 4/14-4/15/14  | Declaration Signing – University of Michigan; Ann Arbor Public Library – Ann Arbor, MI | Speeches   |
| 4/23/14       | Emerging Leaders Webinar   | Webinar Presentation                                     |
| 4/24-27/14    | NYLA SLS Conference – Syracuse, NY   | Welcome and Facilitation                                 |
| 4/29-4/30/14  | 11 <sup>th</sup> Congress of Latvian Librarians – Riga, Latvia                         | Speech   |
| 5/2-5/3/14    | National Summit - <i>Libraries From Now On: Imagining the Future</i>                   | Welcome; Facilitation                                    |
| 5/5-5/6/14    | National Legislative Day – Washington, DC  | Speeches; Legislative Visits                             |
| 5/10/14       | Beta Phi Mu – Syracuse, NY   | Speech   |
| 5/14-5/16/14  | AMBAC Conference – Monterrey, Mexico   | Speech; School Library Panel                             |
| 5/28-5/31/14  | Canadian Library Association – Victoria, BC, Canada                                    | Keynote for Treasure Mountain Canada; Panel Presentation |
| 6/5/14        | ALA Virtual Membership Meeting   | Presentation and Presiding                               |
| 6/6/14        | Lion’s Club – Syracuse, NY   | Speech   |
| 6/9 – 6/10/14 | Empire Collaborations Conference – Albany, NY  | Speeches   |

### Final Thoughts

I started my presidency with a statement of my beliefs (<http://www.barbarastripling.org>) about the power of each of us in the library profession to change the lives of those we serve and the mandate for us to take risks; act on our foundational values of equity, justice, and intellectual freedom; empower others through our libraries by nurturing critical and creative thinking, literacy, and lifelong learning; enable our community members to stand up and advocate for libraries; and lead the transformation of our libraries and communities.

I set five goals that I hoped to accomplish this year:

- Strengthen ALA support for transformation process
- Champion the values of intellectual freedom, equitable access to information, and democratic conversation
- Empower community voices
- Foster diversity in library leadership
- Build a strong, collective ALA voice

Through the dedicated work of Keith Michael Fiels, ALA Executive Director, Mary Ghikas, Senior Associate Executive Director, all ALA staff, member leaders, and members, we have made progress in each of these areas by connecting to and/or deepening important initiatives already in place. I am confident that ALA will continue to offer essential leadership and support for the future of libraries and the library profession under the wise guidance of your next president, Courtney Young.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as your 2013-2014 ALA President.