

**2013-2014 ALA CD#27  
2014 ALA Midwinter Meeting**

**American Library Association Committee on Organization  
Report to Council  
Midwinter Meeting 2014—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**NO ACTION ITEM**

COO had no action items for Council at the 2014 Midwinter Meeting. Therefore COO was not on the Council agenda in Philadelphia.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Two new Membership Initiative Groups have met the requirements of ALA Policy A.4.3.12:

A Membership Initiative Group (MIG) is formed when a group of ALA members identifies a common concern or interest about librarianship which falls outside the delegated responsibility of a single division, roundtable, or unit, and wishes to establish a short-term mechanism to address this concern or interest. To establish a MIG, which must be approved by COO and reported to Council, a group must submit to the Committee on Organization a statement of purpose, at least one hundred signatures of ALA members in good standing, and the names and addresses of designated organizers.

The two new MIGs are the Diversity Membership Initiative Group and the Programming Librarian Membership Initiative Group.

2. As Policy A.4.3.12 states, a MIG can be created as “a short-term mechanism” to address a particular concern or interest. In Philadelphia COO began consideration of what “short-term” signifies—after how much time does a short term conclude? And once that period has passed after the creation of a MIG, what are the implications?

A list of extant MIGs (not including the two new ones) is available at <http://www.ala.org/groups/mcoms/migs>:

- Graphic Novels & Comics in Libraries
- Information Commons
- Libraries Fostering Civic Engagement
- LibraryLab (formerly Library Boing Boing)
- Virtual Communities and Libraries

COO concluded that no action on its part is necessary regarding the “short-term” question. The MIGs are serving their purpose. If member participation and support wane and a MIG ceases to be active, it de facto ceases to exist. COO will, in such a case, recommend to Council the discontinuance of the MIG. Such an action is authorized by COO’s charge, which states in part: “To recommend to council the establishment or discontinuance of divisions, round tables, membership initiative groups, ALA committees, assemblies and joint committees, as the needs of the association may require”

In light of the ambiguity about the meaning of “short-term” COO will consider if ALA policy A.4.3.12 should be revised to substitute the word “informal” for “short-term.”

3. On January 1, 2014 Jim Rettig, chair of COO, sent a discussion paper to COO members and Council asking for ideas about how ALA should respond, what action it should take, when an ALA committee or a Council Committee goes silent (i.e., does not report on its work) and remains silent over a period of time. A mild consensus, both in COO and on Council, indicates that members think that two years of silence from a committee warrants additional action.

In its meetings during the 2014 Midwinter Meeting COO concluded that messaging about the need for committee chairs to communicate about their committees’ work can be improved in the following ways:

- A. COO recommends that the Training, Orientation and Leadership Development Committee (TOLD) consider making its annual training program for committee chairs available as an online training program accessible to individuals on demand. This could take the form of a Webinar or, perhaps, be done through the ALA YouTube Channel. Some committee chairs have scheduling conflicts and cannot attend the face-to-face session at the start of the Annual Conference. This would address that problem.

Online access to committee chair training would complement “The Committee Chair and Staff Liaison’s Handbook” readily available at

<http://www.ala.org/offices/hrdr/abouthrdr/hrdrliasoncomm/otld/alacomchairresources>

Online training also has ALA precedent in the resources listed on the Financial Learning page at <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/financialdata/finlearn>

The COO chair shared this idea via email sent to the TOLD chair and the TOLD staff liaison on February 3, 2014.

- B. The ALA Executive Board has a robust liaison program with every ALA and Council committee. As Board members’ schedules permit, they make a face-to-face visit to the committees for which they have liaison responsibility. These visits offer an opportunity to explain to committees the importance of communication and the expectation that they submit reports about their work two times a year. EB liaisons could communicate this when, as is routine, they email the Board “talking points” document to the committee chair. A brief document explaining the sorts of things a report can address and how to submit their reports could accompany that. A paper copy can also be shared during those visits to committees.

The COO chair shared this idea via email with President Stripling (and copied Kerri Price, Executive Board Secretariat) about this on February 3, 2014.

- C. Give greater visibility to the page that provides links to committee reports. It currently takes five clicks on the current path to progress from the ALA home page to that page at

[http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/cmte\\_info\\_report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/cmte_info_report):

ALA home page

About ALA

ALA Governance

Council

Committee Information Update Report

The path to <http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala>, the page that lists all of the ALA and Council Committees, is:

Pull-down from the COMMITTEES button on the ALA home page to <http://www.ala.org/groups/committees>

Does it make more sense to provide links to committee reports from each committee's page or to aggregate them, as is done at present? If aggregated, can there be a link from <http://www.ala.org/groups/committees> to the committee reports access page?

COO's Response Plan when a Committee Has Not Communicated for a Period of Two Years:

If a committee fails to submit reports about its work for a period of two years, the COO chair will write to the committee's chair. The purpose of that communication will be to:

- A. Reiterate the importance of communication so that members can know what the Association's committees are doing on their behalf.
- B. Explain that during the previous two years it appears that the committee has not fulfilled its responsibility to communicate about its work.
- C. Explain that this absence of communication raises questions about whether or not the committee has been active, whether or not it is contributing to the ALA's mission, and whether or not the committee is needed any longer.
- D. Notify the committee chair that the two-year period of lack of communication from the committee has prompted a review of the committee by the Committee on Organization.
- E. Explain that the committee must submit to COO, via the COO chair, a report explaining:
  - a. What the committee has done during the previous two years
  - b. How its work aligns with ALA's mission and strategic plan
  - c. Whether or not its charge should be updated, and if so, how
  - d. What the committee's agenda is for the next six months
  - e. This report should be submitted no later than thirty days prior to the start of the next Annual Conference or Midwinter Meeting, whichever comes first. This will allow COO to review the report and respond to the committee no later than two weeks prior to that Annual Conference or Midwinter Meeting.

COO will review that report. If COO concludes that the report does not provide evidence that the committee is active and is doing work aligned with ALA's mission and strategic plan, COO will offer the committee chair (or another designated

member of the committee) the opportunity to meet with COO face-to-face at the next Annual Conference or Midwinter Meeting (whichever comes first).

If the committee chair chooses not to meet with COO or if the committee chair meets with COO but COO concludes

- that the committee has not been active during the two-year period, or
- that it does not do work aligned with ALA's mission and strategic plan or does not have a work plan aligned with ALA mission and goals

COO will decide whether or not it should make a recommendation to the ALA Council to discontinue the committee. After Council considers and votes on that recommendation, the COO chair will report the results of its review and Council's action to the committee's chair.

A recommendation to Council to discontinue a committee is authorized in COO's charge:

To advise and assist regarding structural and organizational concerns in ALA. To recommend to council the establishment or discontinuance of divisions, round tables, membership initiative groups, ALA committees, assemblies and joint committees, as the needs of the association may require. To define the functions of these units, subject to the approval of council. To recommend to council the establishment, including the name and size, of other standing committees to consider matters of the association that require continuity of attention by the members. To recommend to executive board the appropriate unit to appoint official representatives to outside organizations. To receive notification of the formation of interdivisional committees.

---

Respectfully submitted to the ALA Council, February 19, 2014

Sandra M. Barstow  
Steven K. Bowers  
Cynthia N. Cobb  
Jill Dixon (intern)  
Brian J. Doherty  
Janice Leslie Greenburg  
Annelle R. Huggins  
Erin Leach (intern)

Gina Persischini  
Kevin Reynolds  
Mary E. Rzepczynski  
James Rettig, chair  
Patricia H. Smith  
Teri Switzer  
Kay E. Vyhnanek