

**2009-2010 ALA CD#7
2010 ALA Midwinter Meeting**

***American Library Association
Report to ALA Council
Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA)
2010 Midwinter Meeting
Boston, Massachusetts***

Introduction

Established in 2008, the relatively new Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) is working diligently to support the Office for Library Advocacy (OLA), as well as advocacy efforts throughout ALA. OLA currently has an annual Budget of \$266,087, and two full-time staff members—Director Marci Merola and Communications Specialist Jackie Finneke. OLA, with advice from COLA, works to provide advocacy resources to libraries around the country, which, in light of the current economy, is no small undertaking.

In keeping with its committee charge, COLA continues to “...support the efforts of advocates for all types of libraries; to develop resources, networks and training materials for advocates at the local, state and national levels with particular emphasis on the grassroots level; to work closely with the Office for Library Advocacy in collaboration with the Public Awareness Committee, the Chapter Relations Committee, the Committee on Legislation, and other ALA offices, divisions, and roundtables as well as external groups to integrate advocacy efforts into the overall planning, priorities and policies of the association; and to cultivate future leadership in order to sustain and enhance the advocacy efforts of the association.”

To that end, COLA has been developing its subcommittee structure and planning for activities during the 2009-2010 year.

Subcommittee Activities

There are currently two groups existing under the umbrella of the ALA Advocacy Committee:

The **Advocacy Coordinating Group** fosters communication and cooperation among ALA committees, units and divisions in order to develop programs and activities in support of library advocacy. The most exciting activity being undertaken by the Advocacy Coordinating Group is *Library Snapshot Day*, which could result in the first association-wide, grassroots, advocacy collaboration designed to assist at the state level.

Library Snapshot Day began as a joint effort of the New Jersey Library Assn. and the New Jersey State Library, to capture library usage across the state during a given day. Other states have followed with similar efforts, including Wisconsin, Kentucky, and

Maine, as well as the DuPage (IL) Library System. Snapshot Days have been successful in garnering participation, numbers, and media attention.

At the 2009 Annual Conference, the ALA Advocacy Coordinating Group expressed interest in creating a how-to resource that all libraries could use to create their own Snapshot Day. Since then, OLA has been working with the New Jersey State Library's Peggy Cadigan to create an online resource, which has just gone live. Visit www.ala.org/librariansnapshotday to learn more.

Using this online resource, the ALA Advocacy Coordinating Group is facilitating efforts to help libraries around the country host their own Snapshot Days. At the Midwinter Meeting in Boston, the ALA Advocacy Coordinating Group will be discussing ways to make this a national initiative.

The **Advocacy Training Subcommittee** plans and implements advocacy training, and during this 2010 Midwinter Meeting will present “**Surviving in a Tough Economy: An Advocacy Institute Workshop.**” Over 60 people have registered for this workshop, which will take place on Friday, January 15, 2010, from 1:30 - 5 p.m. at the Boston Public Library. Breakout sessions will include topics such as maintaining your budget; Working with Decision-Makers; Tips for a Successful Campaign in a Tough Economy; and Positive Messaging in a Tough Economy: Melding Traditional and Social Networking.

Speakers include: Carol Brey-Casiano, Chair, ALA Committee on Library Advocacy; Shirley Bruursema, Chair, Kent District (Michigan) Library Board of Trustees; Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director, ALA; Loida Garcia-Febo, Queens Public Library; Judith Gibbons, Chair, ALA Advocacy Training Subcommittee; Patricia Glass-Schuman, Neal-Schuman Publishers; Kathleen Imhoff; Marci Merola, Director, ALA Office for Library Advocacy; Peter Pearson, Executive Director, Friends of the St. Paul (Minnesota) Public Library; and Denise Zielinski, DuPage (Ill.) Library System.

Current Committee Activities

COLA continues to advise Marci Merola, Director of OLA, and her staff in the development of new important advocacy resources. Three new resources are scheduled to launch in time for the ALA Midwinter Meeting, as part of the **Advocacy University** initiative. They are:

The Library Snapshot Day Primer: www.ala.org/librariansnapshotday

ALA President Camila Alire's Frontline Advocacy Toolkit: www.ala.org/frontlineadvocacy

Making Budget Presentations: www.ala.org/advocacyuniversity

Advocacy University is an initiative that provides tools, training and resources to library advocates to achieve advocacy goals in real situations at the local level. Much of

Advocacy University will include best practices, tips and examples from ALA members across the country. OLA will be looking to the Committee on Library Advocacy to help gather those materials from the membership at large.

COLA also supports an important program taking place at this Midwinter Meeting: **Advocacy on the Front Lines: How to Make a Difference from Where You Sit**, a panel discussion on ALA President Camila Alire's Frontline Advocacy initiative. President Alire and guests will discuss Frontline Advocacy, a unique initiative designed to motivate, encourage and train librarians and library support staff to seize opportunities to promote the diverse professionals, resources, and services of public, school, academic, and special libraries.

Panelists include: Hampton "Skip" Auld, Director of the Durham County Library; Rochelle Logan, Associate Director of Support Services for the Douglas County Libraries; Anita Peterson, Senior Librarian of the Richard Donovan Correctional Facility, San Diego, CA; Connie Williams, Past President of the California School Library Association; and Jean Zanoni, Associate Dean of Libraries, Marquette University. This panel discussion is sponsored by the Camila Alire Presidential Initiative Workgroups in cooperation with the ALA Office for Library Advocacy, Governance Office and Office for Literacy and Outreach Services.

This program takes place on Saturday, January 16, 2010, from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m., at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Room 260.

Support for OLA and Funding Crisis Efforts

During this past year, the Office for Library Advocacy has spearheaded efforts to respond to library closures and other catastrophic library fiscal crises at the state and local level. The goal of ALA's involvement is to advance the efforts of the library and/or ALA Chapter in question to avert the closing or restore library funding. ALA can only become involved when its efforts are welcome by and coordinated with the library and/or state Chapter in question.

An "ALA Crisis Team," headed by the Office for Library Advocacy, in close coordination with the Public Information Office, *American Libraries*, the Governance Office, the Chapter Relations Office, ALTAFF, the Office for Government Relations, and members of COLA. Related Divisions are consulted, as appropriate (e.g. PLA when a public library is involved). State libraries are also to be consulted.

In the case of a statewide crisis, the ALA Crisis Team will initiate contact with the ALA Chapter President, Executive Director and/or designate, in order to determine facts and gather background information. In the case of a local crisis, ALA staff will contact the local library director, trustees, Friends or other body legally responsible for library services within the given community, in order to determine facts and gather background information, in concert with the ALA Chapter.

In either case, the ALA Crisis Team will convey information to the ALA President and Executive Director, who will then confer with the ALA Executive Committee.

Upon conferring with the ALA Executive Committee, the ALA President will work with PIO, OLA, and the local trustees or Chapter President to issue a national statement on behalf of the library in crisis. ALA will use its media outlets, including *AL Direct*, *American Libraries*, *American Libraries Online*, the ALA website, blogs and discussion lists, to publicize the crisis to the best of its ability. Media contacts and specific actions in support of the library will be communicated to the Board on an ongoing basis. Any specific actions in support of the library will also be communicated to COLA, ALA Council, and members on an ongoing basis.

This plan is still a work in progress but represents much progress for the Association to be able to react quickly in crisis situations. Recent Funding Crises that were partially or fully averted include:

Colton, CA-- The mayor shut both public libraries in town, in order to achieve a \$500,000 savings towards a citywide budget shortfall of \$4 million. Seventeen workers were laid off; and the libraries would remain closed until mid-2010.

The Library Board, local Friends groups, and outraged citizens voiced their concern at a city council meeting. ALA issued a statement from the president. Less than one month later, the libraries were reopened. One full-time and four part-time library workers were reinstated. The library manager has not been called back to work, however.

Ohio -- The Governor's threatened budget decrease of 30% would have amounted to a \$227.3 million loss over the next two years from the state's Public Library Fund. (This would compound an initial 20% reduction due to tax revenue drop.) Advocates across the state rallied, starting virtual campaigns, working with the media and working with ALA to issue statements from the president. The final decrease amounted to 11%.

Florida-- Under pressure to reduce the state budget, the house and appropriations committees zeroed out library funding, resulting in a \$22 million loss. The only hope for reinstating funding was a 72-hour "cooling off" period before any decisions were official.

During that 72 hours, local library advocates contact representatives, and worked with the media. Ultimately, the state's library funding was reinstated at \$21.5 million.

Upcoming COLA Activities

During this 2010 Midwinter Meeting, COLA will be exploring new ways to foster library advocacy on all fronts. That includes a careful review of the Draft ALA Strategic Plan 2015, particularly in relation to advocacy issues and themes.

As we pursue effective library advocacy efforts, both COLA and OLA welcome your comments and ideas; please contact me at breycx@elpasotexas.gov or OLA Director Marci Merola at mmerola@ala.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Brey-Casiano
Chair,
Committee on Library Advocacy

Committee Members: Robert E. Banks, Wanda Brown, Pamela B. Chesky, Peggy J. Danhof, Ann Dutton Ewbank, Donna O. Dziedzic, Charlotte L. Glover, Frances G. Kaufmann, Karen Keys, Debra Kay Logan, Joan Ross Reeves, Patricia A. Wand, Christy D'Antonio (Intern) and Patricia M. Hogan, Executive Board Liaison.

Staff Liaison: Marci Merola, Director OLA