

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Digital Content & Libraries Working Group

**ACTION REQUESTED/
INFORMATION/REPORT:** For information and discussion

ACTION REQUESTED BY: Sari Feldman and Robert Wolven, Co-chairs, ALA Digital
Content & Libraries Working Group

CONTACT PERSON: Alan Inouye, 202-276-6738, ainouye@alawash.org

DRAFT OF MOTION: Not applicable

DATE: June 15, 2012

BACKGROUND: This written report provides a summary of activities of the
Digital Content & Libraries Working Group since April 20,
2012 and provides directions for the future. This report is
intended to serve as the baseline for an oral discussion by
the Working Group Co-chairs at the Executive Board I
meeting at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference.

Attachments: Print copies of the *American Libraries* E-Content
Supplement available in the meeting room

Thank you to the ALA Executive Board for this invitation to submit a written report and engage in an oral discussion on the activities and plans of the Digital Content & Libraries Working Group. As a representative of the Working Group appeared at the Executive Board meeting of April 20, 2012, our reports in Anaheim will focus on developments since then.

Author Groups in New York—Plus Hachette

In mid-May the “ALA delegation” made its [third multi-day trip](#) to New York since the 2012 Midwinter Meeting. Molly Raphael, Keith Michael Fiels, Robert Wolven, and Alan Inouye travelled to New York to meet with Hachette Book Group and four author organizations—the American Society for Journalists and Authors, the Authors Guild, PEN American Center, and the National Writers Union.

The delegation had a very promising meeting at Hachette. It quickly became obvious that Hachette Book Group (HBG) executives and digital strategists have spent considerable time thinking about the library ebook market. We were pleased to learn that starting this spring, Hachette is conducting a pilot with two ebook distributors for libraries, which will bring a selection of HBG’s recent bestselling ebooks to 7 million library patrons. These pilot programs will help HBG learn more about library patrons’ ebook interests, usage, and expectations, and help the publisher devise the best strategy to reach the widest audience of ebook readers in libraries.

In an important respect, we found common cause with authors: We seem to share great uncertainty in our respective environments and a feeling that, while technology should enable bright futures for the knowledge society, somehow our particular populations are getting the short end of the stick. Moreover, just as with publishers and distributors (and libraries), there is a great variety of viewpoints on access to digital content among authors and author groups.

The *American Libraries* Supplement

As a new activity, the Working Group views learning and education as an internal priority—it cannot provide advice without collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate information. But this information obtained for its internal work can also be useful for the library community at large. Thus emerged the idea of producing a second *American Libraries* supplement (the first one was released at the 2012 Midwinter Meeting). Work commenced in February with [public release in late May](#). The supplement “E-Content: The Digital Dialogue” includes:

- A Look Down the Digital Road by Alan Inouye
- Digital Working Group Pushes for Expanded Ebook Access by Sari Feldman and Robert Wolven
- Warning: You Are About to Enter the Ebook Zone by Robert C. Maier and Carrie Russell
- Navigating the Ebook Revolution by James LaRue

- A Publisher's View by Lisa Long-Hickman
- A Digital Dilemma: Ebooks and Users' Rights by Deborah Caldwell-Stone
- Lessons from the Typewriter by Peter Brantley

The articles in the supplement range from an update on the Working Group and discussion of varying licensing regimes to larger issues relating to privacy and the fragmentation of culture resulting from ebooks as they are available today.

Outreach

Selected outreach activities in the past two months include:

- Presentation at the "ALA at DPLA West" DPLA Meeting, San Francisco, Calif., April 27, 2012, [Sari Feldman](#)
- Presentation of "Future of Libraries Gets High Profile at Worcester Public Library," Worcester, Mass., May 8, 2012, [Molly Raphael](#)
- Presentation at the New Hampshire Library Association Digital Summit, Hooksett, N.H., June 1, 2012, [Alan Inouye](#)
- Presentation at the panel "What Librarians Wish Publishers Knew: They Build...Book Buzz!" at Book Expo America, New York, N.Y., June 5, 2012, [Sari Feldman](#)
- Bob Wolven [quoted](#) in "E-Books, Caveats and All, May Be Boon to Cash-Strapped Libraries," WNYC radio, May 24, 2012
- Carrie Russell [quoted](#) in "E-books Not So Easy to Find at the Library," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis–St. Paul), May 26, 2012
- Bob Wolven [quoted](#) in "Morning Edition," *National Public Radio*, May 29, 2012

In-process Activities and Looking to the Future

We are pursuing diverse additional activities under the auspices of the Working Group. Improved data is often raised as a prerequisite for changing business policies and more effective decision making. ALA participates on the Library Advisory Board of the [Pew study](#) on ebooks and libraries, which will be released during the Annual Conference: ALA Councilor Bobbi Newman and OITP staffer Larra Clark are members. Also, ALA is cooperating with OverDrive to collect data to help our understanding of user behavior with respect to ebook use and purchasing decisions.

A subgroup of the Working Group, chaired by James LaRue, Director of the Douglas County Libraries) was established to examine libraries' increasingly important role in facilitating the production, or directly producing, information. This subgroup [solicited input](#) broadly from the library community. The results are being analyzed and the directions libraries are taking will be used to inform future priorities of the Working Group.

An important mechanism to make information available to the library community is the Transforming Libraries website. A major effort is underway to improve the usability of the ebook and collections segment of this site and to bolster its content.

The Working Group is reviewing its priorities for the coming year. Clearly, the ebook and trade publisher issue will continue to receive priority. We have had ongoing discussions with publishers and distributors through multiple small group or one-on-one in-person meetings, conference calls, and e-mail. We expect to continue to provide input on their planning for pilots and other initiatives.

However, other digital content issues, including those relating to accessibility and privacy, require increased attention and we are in the process of determining those topics that we will emphasize and how much resource should be allocated to them. Such planning is a major agenda item for our business meeting on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. at the Annual Conference. The Working Group is also sponsoring a [public program](#) on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. that features Sari Feldman, Bob Wolven, and Eric Hellman (President of Gluejar) from the Working Group, and leaders from the broader community Maura Marx (Director, Digital Public Library of America), Peter Brantley (Director, BookServer Project, Internet Archive), and Lee Rainie (Director, Pew Internet and American Life Project).

Overall, we are pleased that we've made some progress in the past months and raised ALA's profile on the ebook matter. Thus, we are optimistic but at the same time temper that optimism with the realization that the change and challenges ahead are formidable, both for the library community and the entire information ecosystem. We look forward to working with a staff team augmented with Kathy Rosa, the newly-hired Director of the Office for Research & Statistics, and Sara Fuchs, a newly-hired part-time staffer devoted to digital content issues in that office. One area for which we have unqualified appreciation is the enthusiasm, sincerity, and hard work we have benefited from throughout the Association, from members and staff alike. We appreciate this support and hope that we are fortunate enough to continue to receive it in the coming months. Our developments are disseminated via the *American Libraries* E-Content [blog](#), and we hope that you will be able to visit it periodically.