

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** Conflict of interest policy review

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

Approve recommended modification of policy.

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** ALA Committee on Accreditation

**CONTACT PERSON:** Karen O'Brien, 312-280-2434, kobrien@ala.org

**DRAFT OF MOTION:**

The ALA Executive Board approve modification to ALA-Committee on Accreditation (COA) policy I.4.2 as amended November 17, 2012.\*

**DATE:** December 7, 2012

**BACKGROUND:**

This item follows on COA Strategic Plan 2011-2015 Objective 3.3, reviewed at the COA Spring Meeting on April 14, 2012, the COA Meeting at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference on June 23, 2012, following an April 20, 2012, resolution by the ALA Executive Board as follows, and acted on at the COA Fall Meeting on November 17, 2012.

Resolved: That the ALA Executive Board requests that the Committee on Accreditation, working in concert with the Committee on Professional Ethics, review the current COA conflict of interest policies and recommend modifications as appropriate by the 2013 Midwinter Meeting.

Bracketed **bolding** indicates amendment.

\*I.4.2 Conflict of interest policy

It is the responsibility of each COA member to disclose any personal, financial, and/or professional interest that might create a conflict with that member's ability to carry out fairly and objectively his or her responsibility as a COA member. Typical situations requiring member disclosure and COA review include: 1) current or recent employment by or consulting arrangements [**in fact or under discussion**] with an institution of higher education that offers or proposes to offer master's degrees in library and information studies; 2) close personal relationships with individuals at institutions with an LIS program; 3) current or recent student status at an institution with an LIS program; 4) any

other interest that he or she believes might prevent their objectivity or cause a reasonable person to believe he or she is biased.

Each member's disclosure is reviewed by the COA at least once a year and also as disclosures are presented. Generally, any conflicts of interest are resolved through the member's recusal from discussions or votes on the issue or program related to the conflict. COA may request that a member recuse himself or herself due to a disclosed conflict of interest. On a case-by-case basis, the COA may also consider and adopt additional measures to ensure that its work is not compromised by a potential or actual conflict of interest.

The COA action was as follows as a result of discussion which included advice from the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE) as reflected in the attached.\*

It was moved by L. Jeng and seconded by M. Stansbury THAT THE COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION APPROVES THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENT TO POLICY I.4.2, COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY, OF THE *ACCREDITATION PROCESS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES (AP3)*:

(To add bracketed language to item 1 in first paragraph)

Typical situations requiring member disclosure and COA review include: 1) current or recent employment by or consulting arrangements [in fact or under discussion] with an institution of higher education that offers or proposes to offer master's degrees in library and information studies;

Motion carried: Yes—11, No—0.

It was moved by L. Jeng and seconded by B. Moran THAT THE COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION APPROVES THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENT TO POLICY I.4.2, COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY, OF THE *ACCREDITATION PROCESS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES (AP3)*:

(To add as second paragraph)

ALA avoids appointing anyone to the COA who during the term of the appointment would be expected to meet with the COA regarding the accredited status of a program within an institution that employs that person.

Motion failed: Yes—0, No—11.

\*Attachment: COA 2012 Fall Meeting *Tab 2 – ACTION ITEM*.

**Tab 2 – ACTION ITEM – COA Conflict of Interest Policy**

**Background**

This item follows on COA Strategic Plan 2011-2015 objective 3.3, discussed most recently at the Spring 2012 COA meeting April 14, 2012 and reviewed as an item on the consent agenda for the COA meeting at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference June 23, 2012, following an April 20, 2012, ALA Executive Board resolution:

Resolved: That the ALA Executive Board requests that the Committee on Accreditation, working in concert with the Committee on Professional Ethics, review the current COA conflict of interest policies and recommend modifications as appropriate by the 2013 Midwinter Meeting.

**ALA Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE) Advice**

To: Brian Andrew, Chair, ALA Committee on Accreditation  
From: Martin Garnar, Chair, ALA Committee on Professional Ethics  
RE: COA Conflict of Interest Policy  
Date: 29 June 2012

The Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE) has reviewed the proposed changes to the Committee on Accreditation (COA) policy regarding conflicts of interest. We have a few comments for your consideration and, since our schedules did not permit a meeting at conference, we include them here.

For the new sentence inserted after the numbered list that begins with "ALA avoids..." the Committee on Professional Ethics recommends replacing that sentence with the following:

ALA avoids appointment of anyone employed by an LIS program scheduled to appear before COA for any reason during the term of the appointment.

The committee felt that any conflicts of interest involving the director would also be shared by other faculty or staff.

<snip; a question having to do with types of programs, unrelated to the topic>

...since consulting is mentioned in this policy, we wanted to draw your attention to the newly adopted ASCLA Library Consultant Code of Ethics. It may be a useful source should you want to include more information related to consulting. Though the official document hasn't been posted yet, the final draft prior to Annual (and, as we understand, not changed in any substantive manner) is available at <http://connect.ala.org/node/178557>

**Recommended Action**

Amend policy as advised and, with further clarification. Suggested revision is in brackets, bolded.

It is the responsibility of each COA member to disclose any personal, financial, and/or professional interest that might create a conflict with that member's ability to carry out fairly and objectively his or her responsibility as a COA member. Typical situations requiring member disclosure and COA review include:

- 1) Current or recent employment by or consulting arrangements [**in fact or under discussion**] with an institution of higher education that offers or proposes to offer master's degrees in library and information studies;
- 2) Close personal relationships with individuals at institutions with an LIS program;
- 3) Current or recent student status at an institution with an LIS program;
- 4) Any other interest that he or she believes might prevent their objectivity or cause a reasonable person to believe he or she is biased.

**[ALA avoids appointing anyone to the COA who during the term of the appointment would be expected to meet with the COA regarding the accredited status of a program within an institution that employs that person.]**

Each member's disclosure is reviewed by the COA at least once a year and also as disclosures are presented. Generally, any conflicts of interest are resolved through the member's recusal from discussions or votes on the issue or program related to the conflict. COA may request that a member recuse him- or herself due to a disclosed conflict of interest. On a case-by-case basis, the COA may also consider and adopt additional measures to ensure that its work is not compromised by a potential or actual conflict of interest.

### **Concluding Step**

The director of the ALA Office for Accreditation will inform the ALA Executive Board of COA action on this item. Any changes to the policy will be incorporated to ALA-COA Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures (AP3) <http://www.ala.org/accreditedprograms/standards/AP3>.