

**American Library Association**  
**2009 Midwinter Meeting, Denver, Colorado**  
**Report of James Rettig, President**

Serving as ALA's president is a singular honor and a unique opportunity. While representing ALA and its 68,000 members throughout the country and abroad I have had the opportunity to meet many members, to hear their concerns and ideas, and to share my ideas with them. Among those opportunities—I have seen former co-workers whom I hadn't seen in as many as 25 years, have witnessed a state association president persuade the state's secretary of education make a public pledge to include school libraries in a new statewide initiative, participated in honoring ten librarians nominated by those they serve for the work they do day after day for the communities they serve, and learned repeatedly that our colleagues in other countries have incredibly high regard for the American Library Association.

**Representing and Speaking for ALA**

I have sent informal monthly reports to the Council and the Member Forum lists. These reports for the first half of my term are appended to this report. These detail the events at which I have represented ALA and the interviews I have given on behalf of ALA.

It is hard to believe that it is more than half over, a point reached on January 7. Being a guest on WAMU radio's "The Diane Rehm Show" (<http://wamu.org/programs/dr/09/01/07.php#24509>), syndicated on many public radio stations nationwide was a fitting way to spend that day.

The main topic of that January 7 show was the increased use of libraries during the economic downturn. In July I would not have predicted that this would be the topic of nearly every media interview and appearance during my presidency. I am sure there will be more interviews that focus on this story. In the months ahead I hope there will be others on the successful inclusion of at least part of ALA's proposals for the economic stimulus package.

**Presidential Initiatives**

I continue to work with my presidential initiatives advisory committee to implement initiatives that expand opportunities for ALA members to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from their association.

The call has gone out for proposals for juried grass roots programs and for members to submit video questions for the ALA's presidential candidates via YouTube.

For additional information on my initiatives please consult <http://jimrettig.org/content/initiatives/initiatives.htm>.

**President's Programs in 2009**

Dr. Muhammad Yunus will speak at the President's Program at the Midwinter Meeting in Denver in January. Dr. Yunus received the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his groundbreaking work to help the poorest of the poor in Third World countries break the cycle poverty.

Mr. Tom Blanton, director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University will speak at the President's program at the Annual Conference in July. He is director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/>). He will speak on access to government information.

## President's Informal Report for July 2008

I hope that all of you had safe, hassle-free travels home from Anaheim.

It has been good to see conversation on the Council list—as well as a little light bulb humor about the way Council meets its responsibilities. (I do wonder, though—what roles do the president, the parliamentarian, and executive director play in changing a light bulb?)

Since the Annual Conference I have done the following in my role as ALA's president:

Spoke on "Challenges for Academic Libraries in the Networked World" at the 2008 Sino-US Library Practices Forum in Kunming, China. This conference was cosponsored by the Chinese American Librarians Association (<http://www.cala-web.org/>) and Kunming University of Science and Technology and other universities in Yunnan Province. My CALA colleagues and our local hosts were models of hospitality. They are also very patient teachers on how to use chopsticks.

Did media interviews on the following topics:

- Increased use of libraries in economic hard times (for the AP and for a newspaper in Ohio)
- What makes a good library? (Cleveland newspaper)

Had the first in a year-long series of regularly scheduled phone conversations with ALA's executive director, Keith Michael Fiels.

## ALA President's Informal Report for August 2008

In my role as ALA president I did the following during August :

### CONFERENCES

August 10-14 I participated in IFLA's World Library and Information Congress in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. The conference theme was "Libraries without borders: Navigating towards Global Understanding." This was my first IFLA conference. It was good to experience an event whose conventions, schedule, and structure were new to me; it helped me imagine how first-timers to our massive Annual Conference must feel.

During the IFLA conference I signed an agreement between the association and the Berufsverband Information Bibliothek (BIB). The two organizations will work together to facilitate exchanges between librarians of the two countries. German librarians interested in an exchange in the United States can contact BIB which will work with ALA's International Relations Office to connect to libraries in the United States. Although no funds are available at this time U.S. librarians interested in exchanges in Germany should contact the International Relations Office at intl@ala.org.

### PRESS INTERVIEWS

- Interviews on the relationship between increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn with the following:
  - *Democrat and Chronicle*, Rochester, NY
  - *Sacramento Bee*, Sacramento, CA
  - *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Lexington, KY
  - Associated Press, WV
  - *Press Enterprise*, Riverside, CA
  - *Toledo Blade*, Toledo, OH
  - *Oak Leaves*, Oak Park, IL
- Interview on electronic media and services in libraries, *Christian Science Monitor*, Boston, MA
- Panelist in program on the future of libraries and librarians on KQED's "Forum" call-in radio show; archived at <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R808261000>

In interviews with the print media I observed two things. First, national and regional reporters ask more insightful questions and have prepared for the interviews. Second, it seems that few of them have visited a public library recently. Frequently they were surprised to learn about services that are common in our public libraries. Michael Krasny, KQED's host, was briefed very well on current library issues.

### GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

- Presided during the Executive Board's Executive Committee conference call on August 4
- The Executive Board did not conduct a conference call in August

## ALA President's Informal Report for September 2008

In my role as ALA president I did the following during September:

### CONFERENCES

- September 18-20: Spoke as part of an Advocacy Institute at the REFORMA National Conference in El Paso, TX. At the opening session I greeted the conferees on behalf of ALA's members.
- September 23: With Michael Dowling of ALA's Chapter Relations Office and Harriet Coulter, director of the Richmond Public Library, attended a discussion at the International City/County Management Association annual conference in Richmond, VA. We served as "resources" persons for a discussion about the benefits public libraries provide to their communities.
- September 24-25: Spoke at the annual conference of the South Dakota Library Association, Chamberlain, SD
- September 25-26: Spoke at the annual conference of the Illinois Library Association, Chicago, IL
- September 27: Participated in the Banned Books Read-Out sponsored by ALA, the Chicago Tribune, and the McCormick Freedom Museum, Chicago, IL. The event was a great success, attracting hundreds of people. Guest authors included Judy Blume and Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, authors of *And Tango Makes Three*, the most frequently challenged book in both 2006 and 2007.

### MEETINGS

- September 12: Participated in the fall meeting of the Virginia Independent College and University Libraries Association (VICULA) at Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, VA. The University of Richmond is a member of VICULA.
- September 23: Participated in a meeting of Virginia library leaders at the Library of Virginia, Richmond. Dr. Sandy Treadway, Virginia's state librarian, convened the meeting to consider ways that Virginia's various library organizations can work together to further common interests.

### PRESS INTERVIEWS

- Interviews on censorship in libraries and/or Banned Books Week:
  - Associated Press, Anchorage, AK
  - *Post and Courier*, Charleston, SC
- Interviews on the relationship between increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn with the following:
  - *Caller Times*, Corpus Christi, TX
  - *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, Loudoun County, VA
- Provided background information on censorship in libraries to a producer for ABC's *Good Morning America* show

### GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

- September 2: Presided during the Executive Board's Executive Committee conference call on
- September 15: Presided during the Executive Board's conference call on
- September 30: Participated with representatives of other library associations (e.g., SLA, LLAA, MLA) in a conference call interview of candidates for the IFLA board.
- September 5: Presided during conference call of the ALA-APA Board

## ALA President's Informal Report for October 2008

In my role as ALA president I did the following during October:

### CONFERENCES

- October 2-3: Spoke at the [Kentucky Library Association/Southeastern Library Association National Diversity in Libraries conference](#), Louisville, KY
- October 7: In my role as the University of Richmond's registered DMCA agent I and a law school professor participated in a student-sponsored program on intellectual property and peer-to-peer software
- October 15-17: Spoke at the [Georgia Council of Media Organizations conference](#), Athens, GA
- October 21-22: Spoke at the Mississippi Library Association conference Natchez, MS

### MEETINGS

- October 14: With Marci Morales of ALA's Public Information Office, Rochelle Lefkowitz of ProMedia, and Alston Roberts of the Washington Office met with editors of Washington-based media:
  - [Change](#) (aimed at the higher ed community)
  - [The Diane Rhem Show](#), WAMU radio
  - [NEA Today](#), National Education Association
  - [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
  - [Diverse: Issues In Higher Education](#)
- October 23-24: Meetings with ALA staff at ALA headquarters
- October 24: Participated in the joint meeting of the ALA divisions' executive committees and the ALA Executive Board
- October 28: Participated in a conference call of my advocacy initiative task force

### PRESS INTERVIEWS

- October 23: Interview in the Harpo studios in Chicago; the topic was the Great Stories Club for at-risk young adults. Brief audio clips from the interview will be used on Oprah's XM radio Angels Network.

### GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

- October 25-26: Presided at the fall Executive Board meeting at ALA headquarters
- Have begun a series of telephone conversations with chairs of ALA Committees and Council Committees to make sure I am current on the issues our committees are working on and to share information with them.

I sent my quarterly report to the Executive Board to the Council list and the Members Forum list.

In my role as ALAP-APA president I presided over the APA Board of Directors meeting in Chicago on October 26.

## ALA President's Informal Report for November 2008

In my role as ALA president I did the following during November:

### CONFERENCES

- November 6-8: Spoke at the [Colorado Association of Libraries conference](#), Denver, CO
- November 12-14: Attended the conference on "Cultural Heritage and Living Culture: Defining the US Library Position on Access and Protection of Traditional Cultural Expression," Washington, DC. ALA's Office for Information Technology organized the conference with funding assistance from the McArthur Foundation. It includes speakers and participants representing indigenous people from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, and other parts of the United States, as well as intellectual property experts and representatives of major cultural institutions.
- November 14: Spoke at the dedication of the new Meadowdale Branch of the Chesterfield County Public Library, Richmond, VA
- November 15: Joined the staff and patrons, ranging from preschoolers through teenagers, at the Dr. Clarence V. Cuffee Library of the Chesapeake Public Library, Chesapeake, VA, on National Gaming Day. Patient young people let me play Rock Band with them and then demonstrated how the game is really played by experienced virtual musicians. The most striking experience was watching the kids help each other, collaborated, taught each other, improvised creatively when they weren't sure about the rules for the Pictureka! board game, and organized themselves to track whose turn came next for the various games that filled the facility with fun and activity.
- November 17: Visited North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC. During a full and well planned day I met with the acting provost and with the dean, faculty, and students in the School of Library and Information Sciences. I also gave an early evening lecture followed by a reception. My thanks to my host, Dr. Ismail Dr. Abdullahi.
- November 30: Traveled to Guadalajara in Jalisco state, Mexico, for the annual Guadalajara Book Fair and the XV Coloquio Internacional de Bibliotecarios. Welcomed ALA members at the orientation session hosted by the ALA International Relations Office and enjoyed the gala dinner that evening.

### MEETINGS

- November 3: Follow-up phone conversation with Dr. James Denton of *Change* magazine about a regular ALA presence in *Change*. Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL executive director, and others in ACRL have continued this discussion with *Change* editors.
- November 18: Deborah Balsamo, National Program Manager, EPA Library Network, Research Triangle Park, NC. On Anaheim in July Ms. Balsamo spoke with the ALA Executive Board about EPA's work to comply with Congress's orders to reopen EPA libraries. She attended my presentation at North Carolina Central University the evening before and invited me to visit the nearby EPA library the next morning. She updated me on developments since July.
- November 21: Ann Martin, president of AASL and head of school libraries in Henrico County, Virginia, asked me and Terri Britt, president of the Virginia Educational Media Association, to accompany her to a meeting with Dr. Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction for Virginia. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the role of school libraries in meeting the state's goals for student achievement.

### PRESS INTERVIEWS

- November 11: Alfred Lubrano, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- November 12: Tara Murtha, *Philadelphia Weekly* on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- November 20: *Parade* magazine on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- November 20: Went to the studio of the NBC affiliate in Richmond for an interview on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn. The interview was recorded for use the following week on the *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams*. A story on increased library use in hard times did not run that week, the week that the terrorist attacks on Mumbai dominated the news. In addition the havoc the attackers wreaked in India, they may have derailed a story that would have informed thousands of Americans about the opportunities their local public library offers.

### PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVES

- Emily Sheketoff of the Washington Office was the guest in the November online Salon (Link will be posted at [http://jimrettig.org/content/initiatives/member\\_participation/online\\_salons.htm](http://jimrettig.org/content/initiatives/member_participation/online_salons.htm))
- Issued the call for proposals for "grassroots" programs for the 2009 Annual Conference. See [http://jimrettig.org/content/initiatives/member\\_participation/juried\\_programs.htm](http://jimrettig.org/content/initiatives/member_participation/juried_programs.htm) for deadlines, details, etc. Initial response to this initiative has been very positive.

### GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

- November 3: Presided over a conference call of the Executive Committee of the Executive Board
- November 15: Presided over a conference call of the Executive Board
- Continued my series of telephone conversations with chairs of ALA Committees and Council Committees to make sure I am current on the issues our committees are working on and to share information with them.

**ALA President's Informal Report for December 2008 (corrected and updated 1-4-09)**

In my role as ALA president I did the following during December:

CONFERENCES

- December 1-3: Spoke at the XV Coloquio Internacional de Bibliotecarios, "Información para el cambio social: el papel de las bibliotecas," Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico. I presented a paper: "New Technologies, Citizen Empowerment, and Civic Life."
- December 1-3: Represented ALA at the Guadalajara Book Fair, Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico.
- December 8: Spoke to members of the District of Columbia Library Association. As planned, the DCLA members briefly recessed their holiday party while I spoke.
- December 8-9: Represented ALA at the Coalition for Networked Information conference, Washington, DC.
- December 9: Participated in presenting awards at the "I Love my Librarian" awards ceremony cosponsored by the *New York Times*, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and ALA. A jury of librarians chaired by ALA immediate past president Dr. Lorine Roy selected ten recipients. They represented communities from coast to coast and work in academic, public, school, libraries as well as a juvenile corrections facility library. Hearing their brief but inspiring acceptance speeches reminded everyone present that librarians make a significant positive difference in the communities we serve. In his introductory remarks Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, noted that "Nobody ever graduates from the library because we never quit learning." The ceremony took place at the New York Times Center in New York City. If you weren't able to be there, see <http://alfocus.ala.org/videos/i-love-my-librarian-award-ceremony>. To learn more about the recipients, see <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/lovemylibrarian/home.cfm>.
- December 21: Commencement speaker at the graduation ceremony at the College of Information at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

PRESS INTERVIEWS

- December 4: Kevin Hilmeyer, a freelance writer and a student at Columbia College in Chicago on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 5: Megan Scott of the Associated Press, on libraries' special programming during the holidays for a story about what to do with kids that doesn't cost a lot of money while they are out of school over Christmas vacation
- December 11: Megan Foley with the *North Adams Transcript* (MA) on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 12: Tim Vandennack with the *Elkhart Truth Newspaper* (IN) on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 12: Andalusia Knoll of Pacifica Radio (<http://www.pacifica.org/about/>) about the ALA's efforts to secure funding for libraries in the stimulus and about the library closures in Philadelphia. The interview was for the Free Speech Radio program that airs during Pacifica's nightly news program broadcast on 100 radio stations nationwide.
- December 16: Bill Schackner with the *Pittsburg Post Gazette* on 24-hour service in academic libraries, prompted by Carnegie-Mellon University's plan to offer 24/5 service. (My library has

offered 24/7 service for several years. I recommended that Mr. Schackner also speak with Erika Linke, ACRL president and a library administrator at Carnegie Mellon.)

- December 18, Julian Guthrie of the *San Francisco Chronicle* on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 19: Jessica Driscoll from the *Gloucester County Times* (NJ) on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 22: Colleen Flaherty from the *Greenwich Time* (CT) on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 23: Ben Jones with the *Appleton Post Crescent* (WI) on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn
- December 29: Kathy Matheson of the Associated Press on Mayor Nutter's proposal to close branch libraries in Philadelphia

#### Other media outreach:

- December 9: Approved a statement for a joint press release with the National Education Association on an NEA study documenting an increase in reading among young people.
- An op-ed written with significant assistance from Melanie Anderson of the ALA Washington Office and the ALA Office of Public Information and its consultants was posted on *The Huffington Post* ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-rettig/libraries-stand-ready-to\\_b\\_150268.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-rettig/libraries-stand-ready-to_b_150268.html)) on December 11. Its title is "[Libraries Stand Ready to Help in Tough Economic Times.](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-rettig/libraries-stand-ready-to_b_150268.html)"
- Supplied a brief statement on the educational value of games and gaming to Beth Gallaway, a consultant who is creating an online ALA Toolkit for gaming in libraries—all types of gaming, in all types of libraries.
- Submitted an article to *Change* magazine (<http://www.changemag.org/>) about why strong school libraries matter to higher education. *Change* addresses issues in higher education.
- Responded by email to emailed interview questions submitted by Paul Goodson on behalf of the ALA Student Chapter at the Department of Library Science and Instructional Technology, East Carolina University. It will be published in the chapter's newsletter.

#### Addendum to November report:

- On December 12 *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams* ran a very positive story on increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn (see <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/28165432#28165432>). On November 20 I taped remarks for this story produced by NBC's Los Angeles bureau. My contribution to the story ran 2.6 seconds.
- On November 20 I spoke about increased use of public libraries and the nation's economic downturn with a reporter for *Parade* magazine. *Parade* ran a brief story in the December 21 issue distributed in Sunday newspapers nationwide (see <http://www.parade.com/news/intelligence-report/archive/libraries-facing-closures-and-cuts.html>).

#### PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVES

- Scott Nicholson of the Syracuse University School of Information Studies was the guest in the December online Salon. Prof. Nicholson spoke on gaming in libraries. (Link posted at <http://www.opal-online.org/Nicholson20081219/>)

- Sent a letter to Dr. Muhammad Yunus, 2006 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, who will speak at the president's program at the Midwinter Meeting in Denver. The letter outlines the similarities between the microlending programs Dr. Yunus has developed to alleviate poverty and the work librarians do to increase literacy and knowledge.

GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

- December 4: Presided over a conference call of the Executive Committee of the Executive Board
- December 15: Presided over a conference call of the Executive Board
- Continued my series of telephone conversations with chairs of ALA Committees and Council Committees to make sure I am current on the issues our committees are working on and to share information with them.