

American Library Association
Fall 2009 Executive Board Meeting, Chicago, Illinois
Report of Roberta Stevens, President-elect

Orientation and Media Training

It certainly helped to have just concluded my three-year term on the Executive Board before becoming ALA President-elect. I was able to dive right into an energetic and laughter-filled discussion with Michelle Visel and James Vertovec on both planning for the 2011 inauguration here in Washington and program possibilities for the annual conference in New Orleans during my presidential year. If we're successful in getting even a few of the people we discussed, there will be an outstanding roster of individuals speaking at the conference. And hopefully that will translate into lots of media attention and a healthy conference attendance.

I owe a debt of gratitude to JoAnne Kempf and Lois Ann Gregory-Wood. They led me through the President-elect and President responsibilities as well as the complicated committee appointing process. Their patience warrants them a place in heaven.

Fortunately, I'd had a week of media training at the Office of Personnel Management's Western Management Development Center in Colorado, back in 2000. The session with Dave Baum and Anne Gallagher, though challenging, was actually fun. Afterward, I emailed Mark Gould that "I get it, I get it" ... the inverted pyramid, the circle and taking control, speaking from the heart, the stories, bridging, making the media look with their boss, etc. The experience was loaded with practical advice and useful information.

However, if I had to single out the segment of the two days that I found most rewarding, it was the meeting with the divisions' executive directors. I appreciated their highlighting the three items they most wanted me to be aware of and their willingness to allow me to explore issues with them in greater detail. What I found from the discussion was that they share many of the same concerns, including how best to be structured in order to respond to the volatile economic climate and changes in their members' expectations and ways of "doing business." We are all pulling our oars in the same direction.

Committee on Committees and the Executive Board Nominations

The Committee on Committees met by conference call on October 1 and discussed a slate of candidates. The individuals have been contacted and the deadline is October 26 for hearing back from them.

The Committee on Appointments and the Nominating Committee

Through a conference call on October 6 and follow-on email messages, the Committee on Appointments (the Division President-elects) moved forward with its recommendations for the ALA Nominating Committee. The individuals being recommended for Executive

Board approval represent ethnic, gender, type of library and geographic diversity. We hope it will be an easy “yes.”

Presidential Initiatives Advisory Committee

I have contacted a wide range of individuals (though relatively small group) to assemble here in Washington on November 9 and 10 and discuss ways of transforming my pledges as a candidate into action and accomplishments. I am committed to bringing our newer and younger members into roles in the association that are meaningful to them, assisting smaller and rural libraries with enhancing their financial picture through planned giving, using our natural allies in the author community as advocates for libraries and library employees, exploring how we can grow virtual participation in the association and building on the successful initiatives of the Presidents before me.

Speaking Opportunities

On September 9, I joined a panel at Goucher College for the opening of their new library/student commons, the Athenaeum. In spite of its traditional-sounding name, the facility is very much one that reflects how students engage in the learning process and access information today.

Fifty years ago, Goucher College opened its then new library with a panel addressing the subject “The College Library in a Changing World.” Fittingly, the panel for their new library 50 years later once again addressed the same subject. Some things endure and changes in how college libraries operate is certainly one of those things. Among the panel members were fellow ALA members Jim Neal and Carla Hayden. I spoke about the “future of the library,” especially the outreach opportunities presented by social media and its viral capabilities.

I was delighted to fill in for Camila Alire once again as a member of the Panel on Access to Information and Skills for the launch of the Knight Commission Report “Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age.” Held at the Newseum in Washington, DC, and streamed live over the Internet, the launch featured quite an impressive cast of participants, among them the current Chairman of the FCC Julius Genachowski, former FCC heads Michael Powell and Reed Hundt, the CEO of National Public Radio Vivian Schiller, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Chairman of the Board Ernest Wilson and Aneesh Chopra, Chief Technology Officer of the U.S. Government. Alberto Ibarguen, President and CEO of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, announced a gift of \$3.3 million to eight public libraries at the event. (I took the opportunity to pick up some contact information for Kim Olsen-Clark for the ALA Spectrum Presidential Initiative.)

Donna Nicely, Director of the Nashville Public Library, and I represented the library segment in this cross-section of media/journalism, education and libraries. She was pleased that libraries were “at the table” for the discussion. I take the viewpoint that we’re the 800-pound gorilla in the room, especially since the report’s vision of informed communities requires pursuing these three objectives:

- Maximizing the availability of relevant and credible *information* to communities.
- Strengthening the *capacity* of individuals to engage with information.
- Promoting individual *engagement* with information and the public life of the community.

Who better serves this role than libraries in their communities? We need to stop being grateful to be included and be more assertive about our key purpose of addressing those needs every single day in every single library. Members of our panel talked about media and digital literacy, which gave me the perfect opportunity to step forward about our profession's fundamental responsibility for coaching, assisting and instructing young and old alike in informational literacy.

Travel

It had been many years since I had been at an IFLA Conference. To be more effective as ALA President at IFLA, I urge the next President-elect to attend as well. IFLA, its structure, its personalities and its way of doing business, takes some adjusting to.

I deeply regret that I will be missing the Fall Executive Board Meeting. On October 19, I travel to South Africa with a People to People Library Sciences Delegation being led by John Berry. Ann Hamilton is one of its participants and I look forward to sharing this adventure with her and John.

On November 14, I leave for Shenzhen, China, to present at the International Summit on Public Libraries, followed by a keynote address at the Conference on Library Development, Collaboration, Sharing and Advancement in the New Information Era in Shanghai. The invitations for both presentations were spearheaded by CALA's leadership and members.