

**ALA Executive Board
2008 Fall Board Meeting**

TOPIC: E-Signatures – ALA Petitions

ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of interpretation of ALA policy

DRAFT MOTION: *The ALA Executive Board supports use of electronic signatures wherever the ALA Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual require members to petition for candidacy or other action.*

REQUESTED BY: Mary W. Ghikas, Senior Associate Executive Director

DATE: 16 October 2008

BACKGROUND:

The Electronic Participation Task Force recently forwarded requests from members for an e-petition for Council candidates. ACRL recently sought authorization to implement electronic signatures on petitions for new interest groups. Staff has reviewed ALA policy which, while clear on where petitions are required, is silent on what constitutes a “signature.”

ALA Constitution, Article VI Council, Sec. 4 (c)

*Any action of Council may be set aside by a majority vote by mail in which one-fourth of the members of the Association have voted. Such vote by mail shall be held upon **petition** of one percent of the personal members as certified by the Executive Director of the Association.*

ALA Bylaws, Article II Meetings, Sec. 2 Special Meetings

*Special meetings of the Association may be called by the Executive Board, and shall be called by the President **on request of** [indexed as “petition”] not less than five percent of the voting members of the Association as of the previous July 1, such request to be filed with the executive director at least ninety days before the proposed meeting. At least one month’s notice shall be given, and only the business specified in the call shall be transacted.*

ALA Bylaws, Article III Nominations and Elections, Sec.3 (b)

*The ALA Nominating Committee shall also include on the official ballot other nominations filed with the executive director by **petition** of any twenty-five members of the Association at least four months before the annual conference, provided written consent of these nominees shall have been filed with the executive director of the Association.*

ALA Policy Manual, 6.2.1 **Petitions** for Establishment of New Units of ALA

Minimum acceptable standards for petitions requesting the establishment of new divisions, round tables, and other units of ALA are:

- 1) *The purpose of the petition shall be clearly stated on a single sheet attached to each group of signature pages.*
- 2) *Each signature page shall contain this statement: "I favor this petition to...."*
- 3) *Petitioners shall sign and give library affiliation legibly. Failure to do so may result in the invalidation of the petition.*
- 4) *Information about this format and a sample petition will be supplied from ALA headquarters to anyone inquiring.*
- 5) *Petitioners shall be personal members of ALA.*

ALA and its divisions and round tables likewise require petitions from members to establish new interest groups and/or discussion groups within the unit.

There is no legal impediment to the use of e-signatures. Practically speaking, it is necessary that the Association be reasonably assured that (a) the person is a member and (b) is who they purport to be. Traditionally, petitions have provided an acceptable level of assurance by requesting a membership number and library affiliation, along with a signature. Log-in/password processes can provide a comparable level of confidence.

Staff therefore recommend that the ALA Executive Board support the use of electronic signatures in any circumstance under which ALA policy requires a petition signed by members. Based on current resources, an electronic petition process may be available for nomination petitions beginning with the spring 2009 election (petitions available by December 2008). An electronic petition process for formation of ALA entities is projected for spring 2009.

Development of two types of online petitions is recommended:

(1) Nomination for office –

- It must be possible for a prospective candidate to initiate a petition to run for <> office, including name of office, name of candidate, year of election.
- The petition for that candidate must be accessible on the ALA web site, so that individuals choosing to support the candidacy may login and sign the petition, using name, place of employment and ALA member number.
- When completed (i.e., when the requisite number of signatures are collected) the petition should be directed to the ALA executive director and the candidate to the appropriate site to enter biographical information for the ballot.

(2) Formation of a new ALA entity

- It must be possible for an ALA member to initiate a petition to form a new ALA entity, in accordance with the requirements of the parent body (ALA, ALA division, ALA round table), including name of proposed entity, location within ALA (e.g., <> interest group/ACRL, <> member initiative group/ALA), proposed purpose of entity.
- The petition for formation of the entity must be accessible at an appropriate location on the ALA website, so that individuals choosing to support formation may login and sign the petition, using name, place of employment and ALA member number.
- When completed (i.e., when the requisition number of signatures are collected) the petition should be directed to the appropriate authorizing body.

In both cases, a list of persons who have signed the petition should be visible, without displaying the membership number or other private information.

Attachment: Request from the Electronic Participation Task Force

Lois Ann Gregory-Wood

From: Janet Hill [Janet.Hill@Colorado.EDU]
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 5:06 PM
To: tfoemp@ala.org
Subject: [tfoemp] FW: FW: RE: electronic signatures

Janet Swan Hill, Professor
Associate Director for Technical Services
University of Colorado Libraries, CB184
Boulder, CO 80309
janet.hill@colorado.edu

Tradition is the handing-on of Fire, and not the worship of Ashes.
- Gustav Mahler

From: Mary Ghikas [mailto:mghikas@ala.org]
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 3:53 PM
To: Janet Hill; Lois Ann Gregory-Wood
Cc: Joanne Kempf; Keith Michael Fiels; Sherri Vanyek; Jenny Levine
Subject: RE: [tfoemp] FW: RE: electronic signatures

Thanks, Janet. mg

From: Janet Hill [mailto:Janet.Hill@Colorado.EDU]
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 4:52 PM
To: Mary Ghikas; Lois Ann Gregory-Wood; 'Janet Hill'
Cc: Joanne Kempf; Keith Michael Fiels; Sherri Vanyek; Jenny Levine
Subject: RE: [tfoemp] FW: RE: electronic signatures

Mary, I don't see any need to be restrictive on this interpretation, but I'll forward your message to the TF, who have already been alerted to the issue. I think that this is outside our charge (though we welcome any and all bits of progress) But even so, it's possible somebody on the TF has some thoughts about parameters

janet

Janet Swan Hill, Professor
Associate Director for Technical Services
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- Gustav Mahler

From: Mary Ghikas [mailto:mghikas@ala.org]
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 3:48 PM
To: Lois Ann Gregory-Wood; janet.hill@Colorado.EDU
Cc: Joanne Kempf; Keith Michael Fiels; Sherri Vanyek; Jenny Levine
Subject: RE: [tfoemp] FW: RE: electronic signatures

Lois Ann, we will ask the Executive Board, at their Fall meeting, to approve an *interpretation* of ALA policy (which is basically silent on this topic, as far as I can find) authorizing e-signatures on petitions. I raised this with the Board's executive committee today, so they are expecting such a recommendation.

I also have received a request, from ACRL, to allow e-signatures for petitions to establish interest groups within ACRL. A number of divisions require member petitions to establish new groups, as does ALA with the MIGs (as well as new RTs, etc.). Once one division moves on this, others will -- if they have not already quietly done so.

I am proposing a fairly broad authorization for any place member signatures are required within the ALA member structure/ALA policy. (Based on Paula Goedert's advice, we will continue to seek paper signatures on some business agreements/contracts.) We will want to be *reasonably* certain that people are who they say they are and are members. I'll discuss that with ITTS and see what process they recommend.

Janet, do you see the need to limit this in any way -- or should we assume that if ALA policy requires signatures in order to run for office/form something/refer something to a vote of membership, e-signatures will be accepted. I am not suggesting any particular limitations, just checking....

Until I talk with ITTS, I don't know if this is something we can have in place for this Council election -- but I'll find out.

mg

From: Lois Ann Gregory-Wood
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 2:35 PM
To: Mary Ghikas
Subject: RE: [tfoemp] FW: RE: electronic signatures

Hi, Mary,

As you will see below, the ALA Task Force on Electronic Participation is asking if ALA can establish an online Council petition form so members will be able to use their electronic signatures. Please advise.

Thanks,
Lois Ann

From: Sue MacTavish [mailto:sue.mactavish@northriver.coop]
Sent: Saturday, October 04, 2008 12:03 PM
To: TFOEMP@ala.org
Subject: [tfoemp] FW: RE: electronic signatures

I agree with Jim - that the technology is there to allow for this and is something ALA might look into - it would probably require each member who wanted to use to establish an "electronic" signature that would be password protected on the ALA server. This would allow a person to electronically sign and allow those that receive the electronic signature to trust that signature as real.

This is essentially what you do in a temporary fashion when you file your income taxes electronically.

We were using electronic signatures increasingly at Lockheed Martin before I retired as more and more forms were kept only in electronic form -- those individuals who were required to sign these forms created an electronic signature that was password (and a complicated one - you know with mixture of letters, numbers, symbols, capital letters and had to be some horrible length like 24 characters)protected.

As talk for a future TF to address!

-Sue MacTavish

----- Begin forwarded message -----
Subject: [tfoemp] RE: electronic signatures
Date: 9/29/2008 1:13:08 PM
From: James Casey
To: 'Janet Hill' , tfoemp@ala.org

It is possible for organizations such as foundations to file tax returns electronically without a signature.

<http://www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=169250,00.html>

During the past few years, Libraries have been filing E-Rate Applications on line with electronic signatures that need to be followed up later by a written signature.
<http://www.universalservice.org/sl/>

Acceptance of electronic certifications and signatures has already been underway for many kinds of transactions in business and public sector. I should think that there would be a way for such matters to be handled by ALA.

Running for ALA Council may be especially difficult for those who live in sparsely populated areas where there may not be 25 ALA Members within a 300 mile radius. Electronic signatures on petitions to run for Council may help to broaden the representation on Council.

Jim Casey

From: Janet Hill [mailto:Janet.Hill@Colorado.EDU]
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2008 11:22 AM
To: tfoemp@ala.org
Subject: [tfoemp] FW: electronic signatures

A matter referred to me by Locke Morrissey, the ACRL Division Councilor.

janet

From: Mary Ellen Davis [mailto:mdavis@ala.org]
Sent: Friday, September 26, 2008 11:40 AM
To: Mary Ghikas
Cc: Mary Jane Petrowski; morrisey@usfca.edu
Subject: electronic signatures

Dear Mary,

ACRL has a policy requiring member signatures to petition the Board to create new groups, e.g., interest groups, discussion groups, etc. Is there a way we can collect signatures electronically rather than by paper? Is this a Paula question? If we want groups to work virtually it is a 20th century requirement to have to physically put your signature on a piece of paper. Is there anything we need to be aware of if we allowed e-signatures or any requirements for how we would accept an e-signature?

Your guidance would be appreciated.

Thanks!

Mary Ellen

+++++

Mary Ellen Davis

Executive Director

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