

**ALA Executive Board
2014 Spring Meeting**

TOPIC: ALA Connect Feedback on Strategic Framework

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

REQUESTED BY: Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director
Mary W. Ghikas, Senior Associate Executive Director, ALA

DATE: 9 April 2014

BACKGROUND:

The Strategic Framework, with a cover letter from ALA President Barbara Stripling, was posted to the ALA Member community in ALA Connect on February 18, 2014, requesting feedback. At the same time, four sections of the Strategic Framework were separately, individually, posted: Strategic Framework: Advocacy, Strategic Framework: Information Policy, Strategic Framework: Professional and Leadership Development, Strategic Framework: Enabling Strategies. This provided another option for people who preferred to focus on one aspect of the plan.

The attached document includes the full Strategic Framework as posted, including the letter from ALA President Barbara Stripling, and the feedback received (pages 4-15). Members of the ALA Executive Board followed comments as they were received. This provides a complete list of comments in one stream for ease in discussion.

February 17, 2014 (Posted to ALA Connect, February 18, 2014)

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the ALA Executive Board, I would like to share with you our plans to move the “re-imagining ALA” conversations forward into strategic action. As you know, ALA has been engaged in community conversations with our members over the past couple of years. We realize that any changes we make to our organization must be based on very careful assessment of member needs and wishes, because, although we serve three constituencies (members, libraries, and the public), we must primarily be responsive to members.

We started with large conversation sessions at our conferences, but broadened and deepened the dialogue to include insights from division and round table leadership, Council, focus groups, and a membership survey. The Executive Board and ALA staff accepted the challenge to analyze and synthesize these comprehensive conversations in order to develop a strategic framework that will guide our Association as we re-conceptualize our focus, structure, operations, and culture.

The accompanying document outlines three **strategic initiatives** that reflect the conversations and deliberations of our members and member leaders. In addition, the Executive Board has designated a set of **enabling strategies** for ALA to undertake to create a “welcoming, inclusive, engaged and supportive organization” that is focused on these three strategic initiatives.

The Executive Board invites your feedback on our thinking thus far. This is the first step in a transparent but action-oriented process to bring our aspirations as information professionals and ALA members to life through our professional association. Your engagement throughout the process will enable us to build on the best ideas and make high-impact changes. Please engage with us in creating an ALA community that supports our important mission: to enhance learning and ensure equitable access to information for all.

Barb

Barbara Stripling

ALA President, 2013-2014

NOTE: The entire document is attached and also posted below. For ease in commenting -- and your comments are definitely encouraged -- it is reposted segment-by-segment:

Advocacy: connect.ala.org/node/218696

Information Policy: connect.ala.org/node/218695

Professional and Leadership Development: connect.ala.org/node/218693

Enabling Strategies: connect.ala.org/node/218691

American Library Association

Strategic Framework

“...to ensure equitable access to information for all.”
~ ALA mission statement

ALA will focus on three **strategic initiatives**:

Advocacy

ALA shall advocate the public value of librarians, libraries and information services and seek to:

- Focus ALA’s mission and priorities working with the three constituencies:
 - * ALA members;
 - * libraries; and
 - * the public.
- Represent libraries and information providers at the local, state, federal and international levels while building support for libraries and librarians through public awareness.
- Assure legislation and policies that support information and library services in all types of libraries and information environments.
- Provide a vision of innovation, enable the future of libraries and promote libraries as centers of community engagement and participatory librarianship.
- Promote ALA’s core values and emphasize the impact of libraries, as represented by ALA’s Declaration for the Right to Libraries, to form the basis for advocacy and community conversations.

Information policy

Information policy is comprised of laws, regulations and doctrines, and other decision making and practices, involving information creation, storage, equitable access, communication, accessibility, dissemination, use and preservation.

The American Library Association (ALA), operating in the public interest, focuses at every level on a diverse set of policy areas that includes: intellectual freedom, privacy, civil liberties, telecommunications, funding for education and research programs, funding for libraries, copyright and licensing, government information, and literacy.

Operating on behalf of the public, ALA seeks through libraries to:

- Serve as a knowledgeable resource on policy issues for ALA members and the public at large.

- Lead the advocacy for legislation, regulation, and policies for the public interest.
- Educate library staffs and the public on public policy matters.
- Document the impact of legislation, regulation, and policies on the work of libraries and public access to information.
- Promote coalitions to advance policy positions in advancing ALA's agenda and mission.
- Enable successful models of information access that support the ALA policy agenda.
- Advocate for effective policies that enable libraries to meet the information needs of all sectors of the public.

Professional and Leadership Development

Recognizing that the professional and leadership development of librarians and library workers is essential to high-quality professional practice and the future of libraries and information services, ALA seeks to:

- Provide professional development opportunities through multiple venues.
- Maintain strong accreditation standards and processes for library and information science programs.
- Foster certification programs through the ALA/APA.
- Coordinate the multiple opportunities available throughout ALA to provide a coherent, transparent, and accessible continuing education framework for all members.
- Increase the diversity of library professionals and sustain their professional growth through multiple strategies.
- Provide leadership development opportunities and create new pathways for member leadership in the association.
- Align leadership development and continuing education with best thinking about the changing information environment and ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries.

Enabling Strategies:

- Create an assessment and evaluation process to measure the effect of the strategic initiatives.
- Review governance structure (including committees and round tables) to identify changes to address the strategic initiatives.
- Review staff structure and compensation to ensure focus on strategic initiatives.
- Build a more robust public communication and public relations/marketing capacity.
- Identify revenue streams and fundraising opportunities to support the strategic initiatives.
- Engage division leaders and staff to define their role and contribution to the strategic initiatives.
- Build a sustainable technological infrastructure that enables ALA to advance the strategic initiatives.
- Align ALA publishing and conferences to support the strategic initiatives.
- Strengthen pathways for member involvement/engagement in strategic initiatives.

Feedback

The main post received 1063 views. Thread 1 (Advocacy) received 574 views. Thread 2 (Information Policy) received 221 views. Thread 3 (Professional/Leadership Development) received 265 views. Thread 4 (Enabling Strategies) received 309 views. There were a total of 17 comments on the main post and individual discussion threads. They are numbered sequentially below for ease in reference.

The document was also sent out on various group lists. There is no consolidated record of comments that may have been made on other lists.

Comments on the main thread:

(1)

[Strategic Framework and Enabling Strategies](#)

[Barbara Ford](#) on Tue, 02/18/2014 - 4:17pm

On initial review, this looks like a good document that prioritizes what ALA does and should do and proposes strategies for moving forward together as a large diverse association.

(2)

[Standards role](#)

[Rory Litwin](#) on Tue, 02/18/2014 - 4:34pm

One of the important functions of a professional association is usually to set standards for the professional field. There are a lot of important standards documents that library administrators can refer to to justify budgeting decisions and guide planning. I can think of a number that ACRL has online, but other divisions may also have them. I am wondering where this standard-setting role fits into this framework.

» [reply](#)

[Standards Role](#)

[Robert Banks](#) on Thu, 02/20/2014 - 8:51am

Rory,

I agree that is an important function. I was seeing that role occurring in the "Information Policy" section, but it could also have a place in the "Professional and Leadership Development" although not specifically addressed in either. Does that make sense to you or do you see a better place?

Fortunately, we have a lot of great work already done on this, as you referenced ACRL, etc.; so in some respects it is finding it a home in a place that makes sense to all of us.

Thanks,

Rob Banks, Executive Board

(3)

[Re: Advocacy...](#)

[Michael McCulley](#) on Wed, 02/19/2014 - 5:48pm

Good start on advocacy.

Over my 30 years in the field, I've seen a lot of activity, debate, time, etc. used by national library organizations on various international, national, state, or local issues that are not directly about the members, libraries, library science, our work environments, etc. Not just by ALA, but by SLA and others, too.

I get it; we're activists, we "care," we want good change, we want to save the whales, protect the environment, and so on. So many issues, so little time. There are thousands of organizations whose mission is to be active and involved in major social and societal issues, and I imagine many librarians are active in those organizations. And that's great.

I'd like to see ALA realize it's a "library membership" organization, and first and foremost, it should help its membership in their work, and profession. ALA's stands (resolutions) and involvement in major social and societal issues limits the time members and the staff can spend on the membership as a whole. I think seeing this advocacy statement is a good step in the right direction.

The "Information Policy" statement seems too nebulous and too far-afield of our core mission to serve and help librarian members in their profession, and I wonder how much time we will spend on that versus serving the members more directly. Just food for thought...

Speaking only for himself,
Michael

Michael aka DrWeb | San Diego Public Library / San Diego, CA drweb2@gmail.com

» [reply](#)

[Re: Advocacy](#)

[Robert Banks](#) on Thu, 02/20/2014 - 8:41am

Michael,

I appreciate your good comments.

Your approach to Advocacy in this context is what I was seeing in this document.

It would help me if you could think about the "Information Policy" and give me some ideas about how to make that aspect more concrete and relevant to members.

This is exactly the kind of discussion the board hoped would occur. Thank you for your ideas.

Rob Banks, Executive Board

(4)

[Advocacy](#)

[Carolyn Caywood](#) on Wed, 02/26/2014 - 3:00pm

I believe the most effective advocacy occurs in each library's community, so I see a crossover from leadership development to advocacy. All politics *is* local and libraries need to be embedded in their communities. This is where the partnership with Harwood will help.

Carolyn Caywood, MSLS, retired from Bayside & Special Services Library, 757-499-9131
cacaywood@cox.net

» [reply](#)

[re: Advocacy](#)

[Courtney Young](#) on Thu, 02/27/2014 - 8:54am

Thanks Carolyn for that perspective. The way you articulated the connection of the pieces and the opportunity with Harwood is useful to me.

(5)

[Methodical](#)

[Jennifer Lautzenheiser](#) (observer) on Thu, 02/27/2014 - 9:01am

As a new professional, just becoming active in ALA, I am thrilled to see an effort that is organized, methodical, and measurable. Definitely steps to success! With so many libraries focusing on building their community, this is a perfect time to build upon the backs of that local hard work.

Comments on Thread 1: Advocacy

(6)

[advocacy](#)

[Connie Williams](#) on Wed, 02/19/2014 - 12:13am

make sure that advocacy is active, pro-active, widely dispersed and useful to constituents.

Connie Williams

» [reply](#)

[Advocacy](#)

[Robert Banks](#) on Wed, 02/19/2014 - 2:15pm

Connie,

Those are definitely aspirations for advocacy. As a former member of the Committee on Library Advocacy, I'm very interested in hearing more of your thoughts. I ask you to think about a time when you had a need for advocacy and didn't feel that information, tools, etc. from ALA were not available for your needs. What would you recommend be in place to help you in that situation?

Thanks for your involvement with these issues; it is a big help to ALA.

Rob Banks, ALA Executive Board

(7)

[advocacy and starting now](#)

[David King](#) on Wed, 02/26/2014 - 2:07pm

"Advocate the public value of librarians, libraries, etc" - Two thoughts here (that I hope are incorporated into action plans, goals, etc):

1. Advocate - I'd agree with Connie, it really needs to be pro-active. For example, legislation is mentioned. It's much more helpful to be "advocating" for libraries way before the legislation piece has started. Advocating after something goes awry in local or state legislature is too late.

2. This pro-active advocacy really needs a "non-librarian" touch to it. The usual librarian way to approach advocacy tends to be with mentions of "equality of access", "literacy", etc. Those are all great and all, but at a local (and probably a state) level, I think a business value needs to be strongly presented. Something about how the local economy goes up with an educated community, the value (in dollars and jobs and skills) the library provides, for "free," to the community, and the business/economic/etc impact this has.

I think focusing on those areas will help advocacy make more sense to local and state communities.

(8)

Advocacy - Certified School Librarians in Public Schools

[Susan Hubbs](#) (observer) on Wed, 02/26/2014 - 3:28pm

As ALA focuses on legislation and policies that support information and library services in all types of libraries, please advocate for mandatory certified school librarians for all public schools. Most public school districts in Arizona have secretaries running their school libraries, with certified school librarians staffed only in high school libraries. This trend does not support enabling the future of libraries. When school libraries are not staffed with professionally trained school librarians, they can not provide the academic program components unique to school libraries, and they become devalued. Unfortunately, this mindset carries over to public libraries.

(9)

Advocacy re: certified teacher librarians

[Carol Heinsdorf](#) (observer) on Thu, 02/27/2014 - 10:03am

My two concerns are these:

1. Certified teacher librarians are not consistently recognized as teachers to qualify for repayment of government loans. It is not right for those librarians affected by this inconsistency to have to ameliorate each situation alone, on a personal case-by-case basis.
2. Urban schools throughout the USA are being overtaken by corporate entities. Resulting charter schools, in my experience, most frequently do not provide certified librarians managing school library resources. Schools remaining under the direction of the local district shed certified librarians in the name of budget constraints. The end result is that low-income students, most in need of the certified school librarians and well-resourced school libraries to support critical thinking and analysis, are without the same. This is crippling for our children and a threat to our democracy over the long term.

(10)

[Re: \[ALA Connect\] ALA Members - Strategic Framework and Enabling Strategies: Discussion Thread 1: Advocacy \(New comment\)](#)

[Patricia Antrim](#) on Thu, 02/27/2014 - 10:37am

Carol and all, I agree completely that we need to specifically include school librarians in the wording of this advocacy section. Not only are urban school librarians at risk, but also suburban and rural school librarians are losing their jobs as a result of budget decisions. What you describe about charter schools is certainly the case in my own state, Missouri.

(11)

[advocacy: school and public \[and all of us!\]](#)

[Connie Williams](#) on Fri, 02/28/2014 - 12:32am

I've been working as a library advocate for many years. In California, we've had some good things happen, but like many legislative pieces, it all went away. When the money is good, we often get a little piece of the pie. But when it goes - we go first. With Common Core coming and everyone talking about inquiry learning, and primary documents, and citing - we have a natural leadership role to play. But we have to be assertive, and present, and ahead of the curve in so many arenas.

What I've learned about advocacy is that 1- you have to be relentless; 2- you have to have lots of people involved in being relentless; 3- you have to make lots of people want to "fix" whatever it is that's broken; thus joining in the cause and making change happen because it just "has to" happen.

Pro-active at this point, IMHO includes reaching out to constituent groups like history, English, science, special ed, art and other teachers to want what librarians offer. It means really getting to parents with not just the information, but with the "goods" that they want their kids to have: solid teaching, plenty of books, library activities, etc. To want them enough to work to keep them in their schools; or to bring them back.

It'd be cool to have librarians do things like:

- write articles for social studies, English, etc professional magazines; women's magazines and popular culture magazines
- present en mass at content conferences
- put on festivals that aren't "library" festivals; or be at them with our info & goods [e.g. storytelling festivals, music festivals, etc]
- and to widely invite teachers, principals, etc. to come to our conferences and to make a "track" or other special activities there to make them welcome, and to show them the many things that we do...and create working partnerships [e.g. learning teams that go back to schools and try out new lesson ideas, etc]

-advertise some of the things being done in the library in magazines, etc.

And really, what I really want to do is to have a City bus advertisement campaign all across the U.S. Beautiful signs on buses and taxicabs and the like proclaiming things like: strong school libraries build strong students ; strong schools HAVE strong school libraries.... OR fabulous pictures of kids / teens with tag lines that say something like: 'do your kids have a librarian?'... [I'm not very good at these kinds of slogans, but someone is!...]... something to pique interest, to get parents questioning...and then, hopefully demanding that something be done about adding back librarians.

It's the relentless nature of advocacy that can easily burn us out, but it has to always be done. Everyone expects libraries to be there, and then when they're gone, for some reason they just get used to it. Hopefully, we can find a way to get that positive, active energy going again that says to everyone: you *need* your librarian, you *need* those library [public and school] doors open... and then make it translate into: "Wow! *I* want my kids to have a school with a fully staffed library", "*I* want to be able to go to the library in the evening and not have it be closed" - Just sending out information isn't doing it - we need to be doing things that change minds and hearts...and then generates action.

Wow! I just went on and on.. hopefully it gets some more discussion going! Thank you...

Comments on Thread 2: Information Policy

(12)

[David King](#) on Wed, 02/26/2014 - 2:23pm

For starters, I think this section could use some editing! For example: Instead of "The American Library Association (ALA), operating in the public interest, focuses at every level on a diverse set of policy areas that includes" - can't this say something simpler, like "ALA focuses on:" - I really don't think you need to include lofty phrases like "operating in the public interest" or "focuses at every level on a diverse set of ... " (I don't even think that's accurate).

Editing aside, to me this section is hard to understand. Here's where I'm getting stuck:

- "Serve as a knowledgeable resource on policy issues for ALA members and the public at large." - Do we have a lot of "the public" coming to ALA for policy issues? Really? I think ALA exists to serve it's members primarily (but I could be wrong here).
- "Lead the advocacy for legislation ..." - Great goal! See my comments in the Advocacy section (advocacy needs to start years before the legislation and regulation is discussed).
- Educate ... the public on public policy matters." Again ... isn't ALA here to serve members? I think local libraries would be better off educating their community, rather than ALA somehow coming down to visit Topeka to educate us on intellectual freedom.

That doesn't really make sense to me. Maybe it will when this bullet point is more fleshed out?

- "Enable successful models of information access that support the ALA policy agenda." Again - how does ALA "enable" this? I'm missing some detail here, I think.

So - that's what I saw, anyway. Good start - need more detail, I think.

(13)

[Extra or Absent Word](#)

[Kimberly Lowe](#) (observer) on Wed, 02/26/2014 - 2:46pm

In this passage, "Information policy is comprised of laws, regulations and doctrines, and other decision making and practices," either that last "and" should not be there, or there should be another word before or after it. I apologize for the nitpick but simply cannot make sense of the phrase "other decision making and practices."

(14)

[Information Policy and Education - Not Just for Members](#)

[Daniel Cornwall](#) on Thu, 03/06/2014 - 11:21am

I am very happy to see Information Policy covered in the Strategic Framework. While I support just about everything here, I especially support the statements:

- Serve as a knowledgeable resource on policy issues for ALA members and the public at large.
- Educate library staffs and the public on public policy matters.
- Document the impact of legislation, regulation, and policies on the work of libraries and public access to information.
- Enable successful models of information access that support the ALA policy agenda.

I see where David Lee King is coming from when he says:

Educate ... the public on public policy matters." Again ... isn't ALA here to serve members? I think local libraries would be better off educating their community, rather than ALA somehow coming down to visit Topeka to educate us on intellectual freedom. That doesn't really make sense to me.

Do we have a lot of “the public” coming to ALA for policy issues? Really? I think ALA exists to serve it’s members primarily (but I could be wrong here). - See more at:

<http://connect.ala.org/node/218695#sthash.Sxz5es3X.dpuf>

In response, I'd say that ALA is serving its membership by educating the public on policy matters. Many librarians barely have time to keep with information policy matters themselves, much less organize educational events for their patrons. Also, in many rural states, libraries are run by volunteers who are essentially members of the public. They may or not be members of ALA but our membership is still served by educating them on sound information policy.

As to whether people are coming to ALA on information policy matters, they should be. Just like doctors and nurses would be ideally consulted on healthcare policy. We need to do a better job of making our expertise visible. Otherwise we're ceding the field to copyright holders and censorship advocates.

Finally, other professional associations do make an effort to educate the public on their issues. Two examples:

American Bar Association - http://www.americanbar.org/portals/public_education.html

American Medical Association -

<http://www.ama-assn.org//ama/pub/physician-resources/patient-education-materials.page>

One other issue I'd like to address is the statement, "Enable successful models of information access that support the ALA policy agenda." This statement probably could use some clarification.

When I see this statement, I see ALA bringing libraries together in advocating for open access, serving as a clearinghouse on how to build institutional repositories and bringing libraries and content creators together in building Creative Commons content. There may also be a role in publicizing successful "Douglas County Library" models of ebook ownership.

But what does this statement mean to the writers? Or to other members?

- Serve as a knowledgeable resource on policy issues for ALA members and the public at large.
- Lead the advocacy for legislation, regulation, and policies for the public interest.
- Educate library staffs and the public on public policy matters.
- Document the impact of legislation, regulation, and policies on the work of libraries and public access to information.
- Promote coalitions to advance policy positions in advancing ALA's agenda and mission.
- Enable successful models of information access that support the ALA policy agenda.
- Advocate for effective policies that enable libraries to meet the information needs of all sectors of the public.

- See more at: <http://connect.ala.org/node/218695#sthash.Sxz5es3X.dpuf>

"And besides all that, what we need is a decentralized, distributed system of depositing electronic files to local libraries willing to host them." -- Daniel Cornwall, tipping his hat to Cato the Elder for the original quote.

Comments on Thread 3: Professional/Leadership Development

(15)

On Accreditation

[Kate Kosturski](#) on Tue, 02/18/2014 - 3:09pm

I'm curious to hear any further details you have on point 2, regarding accreditation standards. Would this involve current students as a part of the accreditation committee (not just during the visit, but afterwards?) Would this include more frequent timelines for accreditation review, new accreditation categories?

--

Kate Kosturski

- [reply](#)

re: On Accreditation

[Courtney Young](#) on Thu, 02/27/2014 - 8:51am

Thanks Kate for these questions. Those are all good food for thought. We do not have any further details right now and knew we could improve upon it with your thinking.

Re: On Accreditation

[Robert Banks](#) on Thu, 02/27/2014 - 10:22am

Kate,

Interesting comments. I am NOT an expert on accreditation but having played a very tiny role on the fringe of an accreditation issue, I am aware that it is a very time-consuming, labor-intensive process for each school. That said, I like the concept of more frequent timelines. Given the current process, that is just mindboggling to think about.

I do not want it to become so easy that the generally accepted attitude is that ALA will accredit anything that breathes. That does nothing for anyone and I know that is not currently the case.

It will be interesting to see hope the process might adapt to a changing landscape.

Rob

Comments on Thread 4: Enabling Strategies

(16)

[enabling strategies](#)

[Connie Williams](#) on Wed, 02/19/2014 - 12:17am

Perhaps include ways to simplify the governance processes and organization to make it easier for members to navigate.

Connie Williams

» [reply](#)

[Thanks, Connie. Are there](#)

[Mary Ghikas](#) (staff) on Wed, 02/19/2014 - 10:49am

Thanks, Connie. Are there particular aspects of governance or organization that we might make "easier to navigate" or particular areas where you recommend change?

(17)

[Include Resolutions in assessments / What counts as success?](#)

[Daniel Cornwall](#) on Wed, 03/05/2014 - 10:36pm

As part of "Create an assessment and evaluation process to measure the effect of the strategic initiatives," I'd like to see a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of Resolutions passed by Council. We spend a lot of time crafting them and so it seems like it would be worthwhile to set up a process to evaluate them. I had started a thread on this subject at <http://connect.ala.org/node/218199>, but think the discussion probably more properly belongs here.

Part of the evaluation process for ALA efforts will include what we mean by success. For a Council resolution, I'd like to suggest that any of the following could represent success:

- A policy change happens that can be attributed to a resolution.
- There is a visible raising of awareness of an issue among the general public.
- Resolutions are referred to outside of library literature
- A certain percentage of ALA members take some sort of action based on a Council resolution

I think these types of measures of success could be applicable to a number of ALA initiatives, although in some cases measurements would be difficult.

Thanks for starting the conversation and giving us threads.

"And besides all that, what we need is a decentralized, distributed system of depositing electronic files to local libraries willing to host them." -- Daniel Cornwall, tipping his hat to Cato the Elder for the original quote.