

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Digital Content and Libraries

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

For Information

ACTION REQUESTED BY:

Carolyn Anthony, Co-chair, Digital Content Working Group

Erika Linke, Co-chair, Digital Content Working Group

Alan S. Inouye, Program Manager, Digital Content Initiatives/OITP Director

CONTACT PERSON: Alan Inouye, ainouye@alawash.org; mobile 202 276 6738

DRAFT OF MOTION:

No Action Requested

DATE: January 26, 2015

BACKGROUND:

Summary of activities since the 2014 ALA Annual Conference and plans for the future.

Attachments: None

A TIME OF TRANSITION

The past six months were a time of transition from the three years of strong leadership of Co-chairs Sari Feldman and Robert Wolven. As we know, the largest publishers all now offer their full ebook catalogs to libraries—truly a major accomplishment, most recently acknowledged by *Publishers Weekly* (In “Notable Publishing People of 2014,” November 28, 2014). But we also all know that there are a great many important challenges remaining for libraries in the realm of digital content. As new Co-chairs, we devoted time to becoming familiar with the landscape and the Working Group, which includes a number of new members.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FALL

There were two significant developments this fall. The Adobe Digital Editions privacy breach caused considerable consternation in the library and many other communities. The DCWG responded and LITA and OIF assisted with technical and policy advice. Adobe did take action to address the egregious aspects of this problem. As a consequence, ALA now has a relationship with and contact point at Adobe.

Also this fall, Simon & Schuster changed its policy regarding purchase. Until then, libraries who wanted access to Simon & Schuster ebooks had to offer a purchase option. The company changed its policy so that the purchase option is now exactly that—an option for libraries. Simon & Schuster coordinated with ALA to release the news.

VISITS TO NEW YORK CITY

In early December, a delegation of ALA leadership met with some of the key stakeholders in New York City—Penguin Random House, Macmillan Publishers, Hachette Book Group, New York Public Library, and the Metropolitan New York Library Council. This delegation was led by President Courtney Young and included President-elect Sari Feldman, Immediate Past-president Barbara Stripling, Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels, OITP Director Alan S. Inouye, and us. Additionally, smaller meetings in December and January took place with the Authors Guild, Association of American Publishers, and Independent Book Publishers Association.

Overall, the meetings were very positive experiences. The publishers and other groups all expressed explicit interest in collaborating with ALA and libraries. In all instances, these groups emphasized the value of libraries and librarians in the discovery and marketing of titles and authors—and made suggestions for how the library community may improve its engagement with publishers toward that end. In addition to the basic goal of maintaining solid ALA-publisher relationships, we have some explicit follow-ups to pursue. In particular, we met with the Library Simplified project team at NYPL and hope to have a continuing relationship with this project.

LOOKING AHEAD

One of the big challenges for ebook access is the front-end user experience. With ebooks directly accessible via a number of intermediary companies or other sources, the user is faced with an

overly-complex task that discourages library ebook access. The Library Simplified project is one effort focused on improving this situation.

Also in DCWG's future is the continuing problem of ebook licensing. Even though the largest publishers provide library access, the pricing and other terms remain generally unattractive. Also, there are multiple possibilities for models that provide greater flexibility for libraries and librarians—and we now have a window to advocate for them to the publishers.

We also expect a focus on digital preservation as well as other difficulties such as privacy and access for people with disabilities. And we are exploring media beyond ebooks, though we need to figure out a proper window as the domain is huge—we fear dissipating whatever influence ALA may have. We need to determine which component deserves attention and focus our limited energies accordingly.

For the spring, we are working on another supplement on digital content with *American Libraries* (our fifth), timed for release with the annual conference. Also, the 2015 *Library and Book Trade Almanac (Bowker Annual)* will include several articles on DCWG topics. We continue to use the E-content blog on *American Libraries* and a blog on *Digital Book World* for awareness and dissemination of information.

For this Midwinter Meeting, the DCWG has a business meeting on Saturday, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. in MCP W185a and a public program on Sunday, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. in MCP W196b, which features Steve Potash of OverDrive and Matt Tempelis of 3M.

On behalf of the DCWG, we thank the Executive Board for its continuing leadership and support, going all the way back to Past-president Molly Raphael (and even earlier with Past-president Roberta Stevens and the DCWG predecessor, the EQUACC).

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Anthony
Erika Linke
Co-chairs, ALA Digital Content Working Group