TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Center for the Future of Libraries Update

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Update on activities of the Center for the Future of Libraries.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
Miguel Figueroa, Center for the Future of Libraries

CONTACT PERSON:
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DRAFT OF MOTION:
No motion proposed – informational only

DATE: 10/11/2016

BACKGROUND:

The attached update includes information on the Center’s work across three goal areas:
- Identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve
- Promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future
- Build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues

ATTACHMENT: Report
The American Library Association’s Center for the Future of Libraries works toward three primary goals:

• Identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve
• Promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future
• Build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues

Activity updates have been organized according to these goals.

**Identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve**

The Center’s trend collection remains a popular resource for library professionals, planners, and supporters.

The collection received 9,430 unique page views (16,537 total page views) during the four-month period from June 7, 2016 through October 11, 2016. During the six-month period from December 30, 2015 through June 6, 2016 the collection received 10,720 unique page views (19,687 total page views).

The Center’s e-mail newsletter, Read for Later, which shares the Center’s weekly trend scanning to help library professionals think about the future of our collections, spaces, services, partners, and roles in the community, continues to grow. Subscription to the newsletter has steadily grown to 2,100 current subscribers – in addition to several hundred more via RSS reader apps like Feedly. Newsletter activity remains strong and feedback about the newsletter remains very positive. The newsletter has a unique opens average around 45% - most email marketing resources hold a 20% - 30% unique opens rate as successful.

**Read for Later Readers’ Survey**

The Center launched a readers’ survey on September 12, 2016 to gather input about the newsletter’s usefulness and opportunities for improvement.

A quick look at insights is provided below – a fuller report will be made available for the 2017 Midwinter Meeting.

As of October 11, 2016, the survey received 127 total responses (from a pool of over 2,100 subscribers).

What is your level of interest in the Center's newsletter, Read for Later?

• 48.82% High Interest – Read regularly in its entirety
• 45.67% Medium Interest – Skim for articles of interest
• 2.36% Limited Interest – Skim only specific sections related to my work or interests
• 0.79% Low Interest – Read only occasionally
• 0% No interest
• 2.36% Still deciding

How useful is the Center’s newsletter for your own professional development or trend awareness?
• 47.62% Very useful
• 38.89% Useful
• 9.52% Somewhat useful
• 3.97% Not useful

How useful is information from the Center’s newsletter for developing or considering new collections, partnerships, programs, services, or spaces?
• 22.22% Very useful
• 40.48% Useful
• 33.33% Somewhat useful
• 3.97% Not useful

Have you used content from the newsletter as you have developed new or improved existing collections, partnerships, programs, services, or spaces?
• 42.40% Yes
• 57.60% No

Have you shared any of the articles from the newsletter with colleagues or coworkers?
• 80.95% Yes
• 19.05% No

Have you used content from the newsletter in discussions with colleagues or coworkers?
• 74.60% Yes
• 25.40% No

How important is the Center’s newsletter when considering the work you think the Center should be undertaking?
• 39.52% Very important
• 41.94% Important
• 15.32% Somewhat Important
• 3.23% Not important

Comments were generally positive and constructive and followed themes of:
• A good resource to help us look beyond our current context (5)
• More opportunities for reader engagement and exchange (4)
• More international perspectives (5) and rural perspectives (2)
• More context for how the trends fit into libraries (3)
• Unclear about the Center’s purpose and work (2)
• Too dense or long and too difficult to skim (2)
• More gravitas or deeper coverage (1)
• Place the librarian (instead of the library) as central to the conversation (1)

Some selected positive comments:
• “This is the only newsletter I read all the way through each time. Love it.”
• “I just subscribed and am very impressed with the first issue I received. Don't take it away. Keep it coming.”
• “It is the best ALA product at the moment...”
• “To me, this is the single most important hot linked, topical, eLetter I get!”
• “It’s one of my two favorite resources for keeping up with information that helps me up to date in my work in training-teaching-learning. (My other must-read resources are the New Media Consortium Horizon Project reports.)”

*Promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future*

*Figure 1: The Library Crowd - Screen capture of the Center’s forthcoming crowdsourcing ideation platform.*
The Center helps share information about futuring and innovation techniques through frequent presentations to library staff and the public. In Fiscal Year 2016, the Center provided over 40 presentations. Fiscal Year 2017’s presentation schedule continues to be quite full – 7 presentations so far this year and another 8 scheduled through December 31.

**ASAE Innovation Grant**

The Center is preparing to launch its crowdsourcing platform, The Library Crowd. The Library Crowd will provide an online space for members of the profession to submit innovative solutions to problems in their field and leverage the wisdom of the crowd to point to those solutions which might be most viable. Participants can upvote solutions, provide comments, and follow ideas. When idea submitters have completed their project, they can revise and update the entry with additional information and archive it for others to search and review previous innovative ideas.

Funding for this project was made available through an ASAE Foundation Innovation Grant. The project is anticipated to launch in time for promotion at the 2017 Midwinter Meeting.

**Build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues**

**Center for the Future of Libraries Fellows Program**

The Center for the Future of Libraries will make available a $10,000 fellowship for an individual (or group) from the library profession or from other disciplines with a demonstrated interest in libraries and their future.

The fellowship provides the $10,000 stipend to advance new ideas and perspectives for the future of libraries through the creation of a public product (report, white paper, resource, tool) that will help library professionals envision the future of library collections, partnerships, services, spaces, or technologies. Projects may build on existing work, research, or initiatives of the Association, its Offices, Divisions, and Round Tables, or explore new directions and interests.

Selected individuals will be asked to conduct and complete their project within six months of selection, managing the project with existing employment or any other work responsibilities. The fellowship does not include a residency requirement. International colleagues are encouraged to apply.

The fellowship is designed for individuals with:

- A passion for and commitment to the value of libraries and library professionals
- A unique point of view or vision for the future of libraries or desire to provoke thought around the future of libraries
- The skills and abilities to explore the future of libraries
• Strong analytical, communication, and writing skills and an ability to independently manage a project and delivery timeline

Applications will be evaluated by members of the Center’s Advisory Group.

A call for application will be made available in early November with a first deadline of January 1, 2017.

Library 2.016 Libraries of the Future Mini-Conference

The Center for the Future of Libraries worked with San Jose State University’s School of Information and The Learning Revolution on a Library 2.016: Libraries of the Future Mini-Conference. The October 6th event brought together over 5,600 international registrants, presenters in fifteen concurrent programs, as well as an opening and closing session. The range of topics covered included open educational resources, virtual reality, trends-based strategic planning, civic engagement, information visualization, youth coding programs, campus sustainability, and 3D virtual spaces. Recordings will be available from the mini-conference’s site.

2017 Symposium on the Future of Libraries

The Center for the Future of Libraries is working to develop a Symposium on the Future of Libraries to be held in conjunction with the 2017 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Atlanta.

The Symposium builds on and expands content that had been introduced at the 2016 Midwinter Meeting, including sessions with local civic and social innovators discussing emerging trends and issues for communities.

The 2017 Symposium will provide three plenary sessions, planned around themes of civic, social, and education innovation. Among the invited presenters are representatives from Atlanta’s Center for Civic Innovation (Civic Innovation), We Love the Buhi (Civic Innovation), Georgia Tech’s Center for 21st Century Universities (Education Innovation), Honor Code (Education Innovation), Digital Undivided’s BIG Accelerator Program (Social Innovation), and Welcoming America (Social Innovation).

Additionally, the symposium will provide space for up to 21 concurrent programs spread across three days. The concurrent programs will be developed with ALA divisions, offices, and units (Office for Intellectual Freedom, Public Library Association, Public Programs Office, etc.) and through an open call for proposals. As of October 12th, the open call for proposals has received 30 responses – the call for proposals closes on October 18th. The Center’s Advisory Group will review proposals with notifications sent in early November.

In addition to plenary and concurrent session, each day will conclude with a Day-End Discussion, a facilitated forum where participants will be asked to share their most significant
insights, questions, or priorities. This discussion might facilitate connection across participants with shared interests or priorities and help shape the association’s and Center’s priorities for future-focused discussions.

**Center for the Future of Libraries Advisory Group**

The Center’s Advisory Group continues its productive work focusing on helping the Center develop trend-thinking tools, developing effective partnerships, building promotion and awareness, and considering the Center’s long-term sustainability.

**Questions or Comments**

Questions or comments may be sent to Miguel Figueroa at mfigueroa@ala.org.