

ALCTS Annual Report to ALA Council

Norm Medeiros, ALCTS President 2015–16

The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), a division of the American Library Association, is the premier organization for professionals in acquisitions, collection management, cataloging and metadata, continuing resources, and preservation. Comprising more than three thousand members from throughout the United States and more than forty countries, ALCTS leads the development of principles, standards, and best practices for creating, collecting, organizing, delivering, and preserving information resources in all formats.

The ALCTS Community

The 2015–16 term was the first in which the new ALCTS Strategic Plan (www.ala.org/alcts/about/plans/stratplan#plan) was in force. Focused on areas where special attention is needed to strengthen and grow the association, the Strategic Plan places necessary emphasis on member recruitment and retention. These related goals were approached in several ways over the past year. During ALCTSfest, the Midwinter Meeting reception, we recorded members describing why they joined and continue to serve in ALCTS. The “Why ALCTS?” testimonials (www.ala.org/alctsnews/items/mw2016-why-alcts) featured twenty-four individuals of varying tenure and involvement within ALCTS telling their stories in two-minute video segments. These videos capture the essence of the ALCTS community, the most valuable of all member benefits.

The Advocacy and Policy Committee further fostered community this year by administering a contest to establish a new slogan for ALCTS. During spring 2016, ALA members were encouraged to submit slogan suggestions to be voted on by the ALCTS membership. More than fifty slogans were submitted. As of this writing, the final phase of voting is taking place, with the new slogan set to be unveiled at the ALCTS Membership Meeting and Awards Ceremony at the Annual Conference in Orlando. (*Editor’s note: The winning entry was submitted by Mary Beth Weber. ALCTS’s new slogan is “Creating the Future, Preserving the Past.”*)

In consultation with the New Members Interest Group and coordinated by the Leadership Development Committee, ALCTS is developing a mentoring program to be implemented in the coming year. A new member benefit, the mentoring program will match individuals for a year-long mentoring relationship that encompasses professional and leadership skills rooted in ALCTS’s functional areas. A distinctive feature of the program is that it will support mentees at various stages of their careers and thereby enable individuals to serve as both mentors and mentees. While ALCTS has placed great emphasis over the years on the needs of new members and early career professionals, this program seeks to serve the needs of members at all stages of their career. It is exciting to see the seeds of

this program sown, as it has the potential to more fully foster and galvanize the ALCTS community.

At the 2016 ALA Annual Conference, ALCTS will implement its inaugural Preservation in Action initiative, a program that provides preservation expertise to a cultural heritage institution located near the conference venue. Administered by the Preservation and Reformatting Section (PARS), the Preservation in Action volunteers will visit the Orange County (FL) Historical Society for a daylong project to clean and properly house motion picture film. This initiative is characteristic of ALCTS's generous and community-minded spirit.

Sixty Years of ALCTS

ALCTS will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary in 2017. In anticipation of this diamond anniversary, the board of directors established two task groups to plan events in celebration of this milestone. The first task group will develop a multiday virtual forum to be held in spring 2017. This technology-rich event will bring together ALCTS members and nonmembers alike with programs that are forward-looking and inspirational. The second group, the 60th Anniversary Steering Group, will celebrate ALCTS's rich history and exciting future. The two groups will work with the board and ALCTS operational units to plan and execute a wide array of fun, informative, and nostalgic events. ALCTS is set for a memorable year in 2017.

Operations

With all the hoopla surrounding the new and returning member initiatives and sixtieth anniversary events, it is easy to forget that ALCTS is a complex organization that relies heavily on staff and member volunteers to keep its operations sound. During the past year, the board of directors and Budget and Finance Committee worked judiciously to adjust the FY16 budget and projections for FY17 to strengthen ALCTS's financial standing. ALCTS is not immune to the demographic shifts that are affecting membership across most of ALA's divisions. To offset declines in membership, we bolstered our other revenue sources. Publishing activities have been invigorated by new editors and fresh approaches to soliciting content. Our continuing education program had another banner year, with an impressive array of offerings and registrants. It is our hope that in the coming year our fundraising program can reach new levels, especially as we consider anniversary-year giving campaigns.

I would like to recognize the departure of Christine McConnell, who for more than ten years served in the

ALCTS office as publications and membership specialist. While sad to leave ALCTS, Christine is happy to be back in her native Cleveland. We could not have done better than to hire Brooke Morris as Christine's replacement. Brooke began her ALCTS appointment just days before the ALA Midwinter Meeting, yet performed as a seasoned professional in Boston. She brings fresh ideas and enormous energy to her position, which is critical given the marketing and publishing efforts we have planned. Brooke joins Keri Cascio, executive director, and Julie Reese, continuing education and meetings manager, in forming an amazingly talented and dedicated ALCTS office staff.

Advocacy

ALCTS once again hosted Preservation Week, the annual national awareness campaign for preservation established in 2010. For this year's festivities, ALCTS offered free webinars on preserving your digital life and reformatting audiotapes, and timely advice from ALCTS member and preservation consultant, Donia Conn.

An unexpected advocacy campaign for ALCTS began with an ALA Council resolution at the 2016 Midwinter Meeting urging the Library of Congress (LC) to change its "Illegal aliens" subject heading. In March, LC proposed the more respectful replacement terms of "Noncitizens" for "Aliens" and "Noncitizens" or "Unauthorized immigration" for "Illegal aliens." When ALA's Washington Office discovered that a House of Representatives appropriations bill included language that would prevent LC from changing the current headings, ALCTS took action, jointly authoring with ALA a letter to Congress justifying the replacement of the headings. While the House appropriations subcommittee recently approved the appropriations bill with the mandate for LC to follow the language in US Code, ALA and ALCTS will continue their efforts as the funding bills move through both houses of Congress for final approval. Particular thanks go to CaMMS' Subject Analysis Committee for providing authoritative context to include in the ALA/ALCTS letter.

Transforming ALCTS

We speak endlessly about the changing nature of libraries, and how crucial it is to effectively adapt to these changes. The same advice holds true for library associations. Competition, demographics, communication, and member expectations are all vastly different from when I entered the profession twenty years ago. Over the years, I have seen ALCTS shift to accommodate these new realities, but I believe the change it is undergoing at this moment is more transformational.

The changes in ALCTS leadership, from committee chairs to the board of directors, are bringing into the organization fresh ideas and new ways of collaborating. Moreover, the orientation of many of the newer ALCTS members weaves among or extends beyond the traditional areas of collections, cataloging, and preservation. Providing a home in ALCTS for such individuals whose cross-divisional work may only be marginally related to these foundational functions provides a golden (or should I say, diamond?) recruiting opportunity. Further, these individuals could provide ALCTS a rich assortment of programming, publication, and continuing education opportunities. The 2016 Midwinter Symposium, “Re-envisioning Technical Services to Transform Libraries,” so capably administered by October Ivins, envisioned an expansive, porous, and dynamic technical services future. I am confident that ALCTS will embrace this same exciting vision, leading to a future for the Association even brighter than its past.

Final Thoughts

As I told the board of directors upon receiving the gavel at the 2015 ALA Annual Conference, no president leads alone. While the president may be the face of the Association, the strength he or she garners is derived from the board, and especially the board’s Executive Committee. I was blessed with a deeply dedicated and engaged set of board colleagues this year; I could not have asked for a more superb team. My fellow Executive Committee colleagues—Vicki Sipe (President-Elect), Mary Page (Past-President), Andy Hart (Division Councilor), and Keri Cascio (Executive Director)—served as weekly counsel, providing input and constructive criticism, helping me see matters in multiple dimensions and from diverse perspectives. I am immensely grateful for their support and overwhelming goodness.

It has been my privilege to serve as the 2015–16 ALCTS president, an experience I will never forget. I hope my service has contributed in some small way to the betterment of this community that I love.