



Women in Libraries

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WIL Special Issue - ALA Self-Study

This special mailing to *Women in Libraries* subscribers was prepared to give all of you the opportunity to respond to issues that affect all members of the American Library Association. Please send in your response to the "ALA Organizational Structure - Concept Paper" and other Self-Study issues by October 25, 1994 and have your voice heard.

The Phase I Report of the Self-Study Committee was presented to ALA Council at the Summer 1994 Conference. Many of the most controversial issues in that document are again addressed in this "Concept Paper." Most issues from the Phase I Report discussed at the Council meeting were passed on to committees and subcommittees and have not been finalized. For the complete copy of the "Phase I Report" and/or the *Structure and Governance Audit of the American Library Association September, 1993* (referred to as the "Perlov report" or "CMG") contact ALA Headquarter, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611 or phone (312) 944-6780 or 1-800-545-2433.

For further discussion you may want to contact some of the Feminist Task Force members and *Women in Libraries* subscribers who serve on the ALA Council: Kay A. Cassell, Diedre Conkling, Elizabeth Futas, Sarah Pritchard and Gail Warner.

There was a great deal of discussion about the ALA Self-Study at the Annual Conference in Miami Beach. The Organizational Self-Study Committee (OSSC) stated in its Phase I report that "ALA needs to deal with the fact that it has grown too large to function as both a direct and representative democracy."

With the bylaws change approval, requiring 1% (500+) of the membership to achieve a quorum at annual membership meetings, the members who attended Miami membership were reduced to "chatting" about crucial issues. The OSSC is now recommending that membership meetings be replaced with membership "forums." These forums would not refer matters to

Council. The rationale is that a membership meeting isn't representative, "since all members can't attend." The fact that only 11,174 members (20%) returned their June ballots seems to have escaped the OSSC. If only 20% of the association's members vote, perhaps the quorum for a membership meeting should be 1% of 11,174 or 112 members....

The attached document was prepared by the OSSC and given to Council members at Annual. Hidden within these are recommendations which—if passed—will result in substantial changes in the Association's structure. There appears to be a concerted effort to muzzle free speech, turn the Association back into an elite good old boy's network, and make it almost impossible for individual members to articulate their concerns. Rather than sweeping bureaucracy away, the hidden agenda appears to favor more control by large divisions, roundtables and chapters and less chance for the smaller (read "trouble-making") groups to have input.

There seems to be a contradiction in logic within the OSSC's documents. While extolling intellectual freedom and free speech on one hand, they wish the entire ALA to speak with one voice. While shaking their heads over turf wars between units, they recommend forcing all ALA members into divisional membership (despite the fact that 40% currently do not belong to divisions). At-large council members are seen as not "accountable to anyone." This, despite the fact that all members vote for these councilors. It takes a minimum of several thousand votes to be elected at-large—but often only several hundred for election by a chapter or division.

The Association seems to be moving rapidly into a very conservative mode. Please take some time to read this paper and send back the Structure Response form by October 25.

ALA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - CONCEPT PAPER

"BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS"

June 20, 1994

By the ALA Self-Study Committee Members

INTRODUCTION

A number of concerns related to the structure and organization of ALA surfaced in the Perlov study (see Parking Lot items attached), throughout the hearings held by the Self-Study Committee, and in survey reports from various units of ALA. Surprisingly, there was considerable unanimity in the feedback received; however, there were very few suggestions about how to address these concerns. After the self-study committee analyzed the responses and the statistical data, some preliminary ideas have surfaced which we believe should be explored further.

The purpose of this concept paper is to help focus further thinking and discussions about ALA's structure in the following three stages:

First, the organizational strengths of ALA;

Second, the guiding principles which should govern our search for solutions to current structural concerns; and

Third, some concepts emerging in the committee which merit consideration as a future direction.

With this paper the committee is seeking ideas, suggestions, and reactions to these concepts. It welcomes dialog related to all aspects of structure. What we especially need are specific recommendations on structural change that would help address the following concerns about ALA's structure. We will also be holding hearings at Midwinter when many of these concepts will be under discussion.

UNIVERSAL CONCERNS

The following concerns have been expressed to the Self-Study Committee over and over from all segments of the Association.

- (1) more focus on LIBRARY OR LIBRARY-RELATED issues
- (2) more flexibility and ability to act with speed on issues needing attention
- (3) less competitiveness and overlap among units, since these have become counterproductive
- (4) the ability to speak with one voice and build policy positions agreed to by all players, and
- (5) more focused conferences with greater substance.

Although conference issues are under consideration by a special committee, they are also considered here, since they have a significant relationship to the structure of the association. The self-study committee's findings and recommendations will be shared with the special committee on conferences.

Several other concerns surfaced in the data collection:

- (6) a desire for an individual member to be able to participate in a broader spectrum of Association activities—or to belong to more units—without additional dues expense
- (7) concern over the high cost of dues, including both Association and unit dues
- (8) the need to rethink the way the Association works in the current technological environment.

STRENGTHS

In the voluminous input to the Organizational Self-Study Committee there was near universal agreement that the Association's work in Intellectual Freedom and Legislation constitute major strengths. Analyzing these two popular and successful Association functions, several common characteristics are apparent:

- (1) a strong organizational focus that clearly encompasses many types of library and information agencies;
- (2) an Association-wide office with staff and resources to bring to bear on the issues or concerns;
- (3) involvement and representation from all stakeholders through assemblies, policy development committees, and related committees in various units throughout ALA.

ALA's divisions constitute another major area of strength. Many, but certainly not all, ALA members join the Association primarily to participate in a division. Of the current eleven divisions, the three largest are type-of-library divisions: AASL, ACRL, PLA. The divisions

- (1) provide national leadership within their type of library or activity areas
- (2) have had a major impact on the field through standards and policy development
- (3) accomplish much of ALA's work, along with the more specialized roundtables, through programming, publications, networking, and public relations.

According to Perlov, several ALA divisions are actually model associations, functioning very effectively and carrying out their missions quite well. They frequently function very independently, however, and are not always in sync with ALA and its priorities or goals. Their strength becomes a weakness when it results in the overall work of the association being fragmented and not being directed toward a common set of goals.

Finally, for a significant number of ALA members, the opportunity for person-to-person "networking", particularly at conferences, is a major strength of the Association. As the Association examines structural options, funding strategies, and the use of technology, it is important to keep in mind the critical importance of "networking" and leadership development as priority functions of ALA.

It is worth pointing to a recent ALA activity which, to a significant extent, has brought into sharp focus an Association-wide effort involving the work of Intellectual Freedom and Legislation and the specialized expertise and diversity of perspective represented by the divisions. This effort, the development of a "Statement of Principles in Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure," involved four type-of-library divisions (AASL, ACRL, ASCLA, PLA), one type-of-activity division (LITA), and three ALA committees or subcommittees (Intellectual Freedom, Legislation, Telecommunications). These units worked together to craft the principles, to move the statement rapidly through the process of divisional/committee consideration and support, and to bring the statement to Council for consideration and approval in a very timely manner. The success of the "Policy Forum" provides further evidence of the strength of ALA when it focuses itself in a collective way, much as the Association has been doing for years in Intellectual Freedom and Legislation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the Self-Study Committee examined the strengths and concerns listed above, members determined that a set of principles should guide the search for changes in structure. The committee identified these principles:

1. ALA provides holistic participation in the Association

The current ALA division structure emphasizes separation, artificially dividing the "turf" of the profession into eleven associations, each with interests which overlap those of other divisions. Type-of-library and type-of-activity divisions often compete with each other for rights to program topics. Each division may create smaller units, i.e. sections, committees, task forces, etc., which overlap responsibilities of similar units in other divisions or units of ALA, such as standing or special committees, round tables, etc. Duplicative units are often created as divisions attempt to respond to emerging interests of their members. In order to "hold on to" members and to provide arenas within the division for addressing new concerns, overlapping committees are also created. This duplication has both positive and negative ramifications. It allows members of a division to participate in areas of interest without having to pay additional dues to join another division, which actually has "turf rights." But, it contributes to fragmentation, increases competitiveness, adds to ALA's cost of doing business, and slows down the ability of the Association to act responsively.

2. ALA's governance structure fosters quick, concerted and coordinated national action.

The opportunity to quickly take a position or act on an issue is often lost to ALA because of the need to consult with its many units, each of which has an interest in the issue. Members must pay additional dues for the option of participating in the work of the divisions but often experience frustration because divisions are unable to act in a meaningful and timely manner.

3. ALA speaks with one voice.

ALA's many units speak independently, sometimes in conflict with each other and/or ALA. A structure is needed that provides opportunities for internal disagreement and examination of different perspectives, avenues for building consensus, and procedures to ensure that ALA speaks with one voice in its external communications.

4. Governance structures facilitate decision-making and consume a minimal amount of the Association's resources.

Governance activities exist at many levels of the Association. These activities are costly, not just in terms of the dollars and member or staff time they consume, but also in terms of the overlap and loss of focus they produce within ALA. A "flatter" association with a streamlined governance structure could achieve more focus, make decisions in a more timely manner, and consume fewer of the Association's human and financial resources.

5. Membership in ALA is a satisfying, positive, professional experience.

Members need to feel that they can become involved in the Association, that it reflects their issues and concerns, and that it speaks effectively for them. They need a comfortable entry point, and to some degree, a "home" within the Association. They need to feel that they can easily connect with others to share and learn.

CONCEPTS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Building on these guiding principles, the ideas in the Perlov Report, surveys from the different units (divisions, roundtables, and chapters), and input from hearings and the membership survey the committee is considering further study of the following "concepts" or "ideas for discussion."

1. The development of "Policy Councils" (named as such for purposes of discussion).

Organized around issues of association-wide importance, "policy councils" would function somewhat as offices (Intellectual Freedom, Public Relations, Legislation) do now. They would have full-time staff and funding, and bring together representatives from all ALA divisions for the purpose of sharing perspectives and expertise, crafting policy recommendations, programming, and recommending action to the ALA Council.

Two areas currently needing national attention which could benefit from the "policy council" approach include Technology, and Children and Youth. (See Technology Section of the Self-Study Report Part I for details on the idea of a Technology Policy Council)

Some questions to consider are:

- Would policy councils in key areas, i.e., technology, children and youth, continuing education, library education, management, and standards, be a way to help the association focus its various unit toward common direction and action?

- How should they be set up?
- Should members have to pay to belong to such a Council?
- Could current offices be considered "policy councils"?
- Could policy councils replace some divisions or round tables?

2. Changes in dues/membership structure which encourage more people to join divisions.

The committee believes that divisional membership is important to the health of ALA. Divisions play a key role in programming, conferences, standards development, and policy. However, as ALA is currently structured, divisions are in competition with one another and often with the Association. Overlap, particularly between type-of-library and type-of-activity divisions, means members must have multiple memberships to fulfill their professional needs. Having to hold multiple division memberships creates a significant financial pressure on the Association's active members and increases resistance to needed ALA dues increases.

Further, the committee is concerned that forty percent (40%) of ALA members do not belong to even one division. Given the significant percentage of the Association's programming that comes from divisions, and the present reliance on divisions by the Association for leadership in key interest areas such as standards and policy development, a question of fairness emerges. To a significant extent, a member who belongs to no division has shifted Association fiscal support to others.

Some questions to consider are:

- How do we equalize member financial support?
- Should members get on division "free" with their membership?
- Would having all members enter ALA through one type-of-library or workplace division help reduce the turf issues and give everyone a "home" base?
- Should ALA have fewer divisions?
- Should all round tables be "free" and open to all?

3. Changes in conference format to encourage more focused, association-wide programming.

The committee believes that ALA's present conference structure contributes to its organizational problems. ALA's large, unwieldy summer conferences and "quasi-working" Midwinter conference need to be changed. The number of overlapping, competing, and contradictory programs needs to be reduced. Too much programming is entry level, with not enough information offered on progressive levels. There is not enough quality and not enough focus.

In addition, the proliferation of small meetings has become too costly for the Association, and limits ALA's ability to vary its sites and get programming closer to its members.

Some questions to consider are:

- Would concentrating on divisional conferences, returning Midwinter to a true business meeting, and focusing annual conferences on association-wide topics with few or no meetings make sense?
- How does or should electronic mail and fax impact the work of committees?
- How could the open meetings concept still be upheld?
- How can the focus of conferences be sharpened?
- What should be done about the many small meetings that are scheduled, rooms paid for, and then not held?
- Should summer conference be held every other year?
- Should division conferences be held more often?
- Would conference be more useful and pertinent to members if there was tracking of subjects and identification of expertise levels suggested for particular programs?

4. Changes in the composition of Council to represent more ALA units and less at-large seats.

ALA's Council is quite large. It has 176 members (11 division councilors, 53 state councilors, 12 Executive Board members, and 100 at-large members.) At-large councilors represents a very high percentage of the Council membership in comparison to the 11 formally represented units of the association. Round tables have no formal representation and have requested such for years. One consideration might be to shift the balance of Council to increase unit representation and decrease the number of at-large members. At-large councilors do not directly represent any specific "constituency," and are therefore not accountable to anyone.

State chapters are deemed an important part of ALA; however, having one chapter councilor per state on Council contributes to the large size of the council. Some state councilors sitting on the Council make policy decisions while they represent very few ALA member constituents. In states where school and other type-of-library groups are organized outside the state library association, many ALA members are effectively disenfranchised if they do not belong to the "official state association."

Some questions to consider are:

- Should the size of Council be made smaller?

ALA Awards Program

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1985 Anita R. Schiller
1986 Kay A. Cassell
1987 Kathleen M. Heim
1988 Kathleen Weibel
1989 Sanford Berman
1990 Betty-Carol Sellen
1991 E. J. Josey
1992 Susan Searing
1993 Patricia Glass Schuman
1994 Lotsee Patterson

ALA EQUALITY AWARD 1995 NOMINATION FORM

I wish to nominate the following for the ALA Equality Award:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

Which of the following categories best represent the area in which the nominee contributed to equality? (You may check more than one.)

Discrimination in librarianship
Comparable worth/pay equity
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professional association)
Research/publication

Legislative
Education
Minority Concerns
Other

Please provide a short narrative description of the activities of the individual or group which you feel qualifies the nominee for the ALA Equality Award. Please include when and where the activity(ies) occurred.

If there are any documented reports of the activity(ies) please cite and attach if possible.

What impact do you believe this work has had on individuals? On the library and information science profession? Outside the profession?

Attach additional information as available.

NOMINATED BY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATION: December 1, 1994

(over)

Purpose: To be given to an individual or group for an outstanding contribution toward promoting equality between men and women in the library profession. The contribution may be either a sustained one or a single outstanding accomplishment. The award may be given for an activist or scholarly contribution in such areas as pay equity, affirmative action, legislative work and non-sexist education.

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Return this nomination form to the Equality Jury Chairperson by December 1, 1994:

Gail Warner
Josephine County Library System
200 NW C Street
Grants Pass, OR 97526

- Should division representation on Council be proportional to the size of the membership of the division?
- Should the number of at-large members of Council be decreased?
- Should division representation on Council be increased?
- Should the relationship of state chapter to council be reconsidered?
- Would term limits for councilors be one way to increase member participation?
- Should the definition of chapters include Media Associations and others?

FISCAL ISSUES

As the committee continues to look at alternative structures which will enhance ALA's ability to "do its business even better," it will keep fiscal ramifications in mind. We know that certain things may in the short term cost more money, i.e. the setting up of one or two "policy councils." The goal in the long term should be to reduce overlap expenses. As a minimum, the midterm goal should be changes that are revenue neutral, i.e. redistributing existing funding in different ways but not increasing income or expenses substantially.

The committee was not charged to make fiscal recommendations, and therefore will not be making specific fiscal projections. (As the saying goes "We don't do money.")

FEEDBACK/DISCUSSION

Attached to this paper is a feedback sheet which we hope everyone will use to provide reactions, new ideas, and points for discussion. **WE NEED YOUR RESPONSES BY OCTOBER 25TH.**

Please send or fax your comments to: Regina Minudri, 836 The Alameda, Berkeley, CA 94707; FAX 510-526-4908.

[Sample Feedback Sheet]

ALA STRUCTURE RESPONSE FORM

What are your reactions to these proposed areas of change? What are the pluses/advantages/strengths? What are the problems/limitations/issues to be resolved?

1. Policy Councils

Comments:

2. Dues/Membership Consolidation

Comments:

3. Conference Structure

Comments:

4. Council Composition and Make up

Comments:

Other suggestions for organizational or structural change:

RETURN TO REGINA MINUDRI BY OCTOBER 25TH. Mail to 836 the Alameda, Berkeley, CA 94707 or FAX to 510-526-4908.



Women in Libraries

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