

American Library Association
Public Libraries Division (new). Business Meeting
Thursday, July 12, 1951 - Stevens Hotel, Chicago

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m., Mr. Harold F. Brigham, President of the new Division, presiding.

Status of New Division. Mr. Brigham reviewed the status of the new Public Libraries Division. He pointed out that at the July 13 meeting of the A.L.A. Council the second and final vote on the discontinuance of the three old divisions would be taken, and that three groups were in process of becoming sections of the new Division: the Library Extension, the Trustees and the Armed Forces Librarians groups. He announced the adoption of the new By-Laws; the election of Ruth Rutzen as Vice President and President Elect, and of Mrs. Ralph I. Burris as Treasurer; and the appointment by the Board of Helen A. Ridgway as Acting Executive Secretary. Mr. Brigham further stated that the five A.L.A. Councilors whose terms expire in 1951 had been asked to continue as Councilors for the new Division through Saturday, July 14, since the newly elected Councilors would not officially take office until after the Conference.

Report from old Division. Mr. Brigham requested Helen M. Harris, as retiring president of the old Division of Public Libraries, to make a report of the final business meeting of that division. Miss Harris reported that the treasury contained nearly \$5,000 but that two issues of Public Libraries must be paid out of that. She indicated that the chairman of the Library Architecture Committee of the Division had been included on the A.L.A. Committee on Architecture, and reported two recommendations: that the division committee include representatives of various regions so that there would be a more rounded opinion and that the committee prepare an inventory of buildings now under construction. Miss Harris also reported that the four remaining sections of the old division had all indicated that they felt it was not advisable to petition for section status at this time but would be satisfied to serve as continuing committees during the coming year. The old division had also voted to recommend that the new division continue membership in the Council of National Library Associations during the time when federation of library associations is being considered in order that it might have a place to express its opinion. Also discussed at the final business meeting of the old division was the matter of A.L.A. Midwinter meetings. It was suggested that the Midwinter Meetings revert to the practice of being limited to Council, Board and Committee business only in order that those business matters might be accomplished without the distraction of program meetings.

Organization of New Division. Mr. Brigham then asked whether there were any questions in regard to the organization of the new Division. The question was asked whether since some of the directors are representatives of sections this meant that the old sections would not have an elected representative. Mr. Brigham explained that the Board of Directors will be a body of more than 30 members including councilors and that all interests will be represented. He urged each of the outgoing sections to delegate someone to meet with the Board on July 14 in order to have fuller representation.

Mr. Jesse Cross asked whether section chairmen will be represented on the Board. Miss Ridgway replied that the section chairman and one elected representative, as well as the section councilors, will be represented on this Board. Mr. Cross asked whether the Board wanted any statement in advance of the July 14 meeting from those sections desiring section status. Mr. Brigham replied that nothing formal was required, but that they would like to know what action was taken by the groups at their meetings before July 14.

Mr. Brigham then asked if there were any questions regarding section status. He stressed the need of defining the difference between a section and a program group; that the division is the framework for joint action; and that the sections should be strong, identifiable bodies that have working committees and projects that justify section status, not just programs for conferences. He reminded the group that if there were too many sections the purposes of the merger would be defeated; that is, to have a strong overall division. He asked that individuals think this matter through and let the officers know their ideas on this subject especially before the July 14 meeting.

Budget. Mr. Brigham discussed the former operation of the divisions on the 20% membership dues allocation, with the sections of the old Division of Public Libraries receiving \$25 to carry on program activities. The income for the new Division is to be allocated to the sections on a per capita basis, according to the By-Laws, with the per capita rate to be determined by the Board. Under the old system, the Division would expect to use the services of the A.L.A.'s Chief Public Library Specialist as Executive Secretary. Mr. Brigham indicated, however, that the A.L.A. Executive Board may change the allotment of dues to the divisions so that they may possibly receive approximately 60% of dues, with the divisions then accepting responsibility for the maintenance of the Executive Secretary and the Public Library Executive Office. Mr. Brigham stated that the overall financial conditions would be improved if there was an increase in the membership and in the A.L.A. dues, which was scheduled for discussion at the next General Session (July 13). He asked for questions on this matter and how it relates to the Division and Division groups.

Mr. Porro asked whether there would be three section treasuries. Mr. Brigham replied that there would be and that each section would administer its own funds. Mr. Porro asked whether the section treasurer would make a report to the Division treasurer. Mr. Brigham replied, "Not necessarily." Mr. Porro said he understood that groups could request funds for special projects. Mr. Brigham replied that special projects such as Public Libraries will be financed by the Division and section funds will be used for strictly section projects.

The question was asked whether the amount previously allocated from dues would be tripled if the 60% allocation goes through. Mr. Weins replied that the allotment figure would include operation of a headquarters office and that the figure would be approximately three times what it was. He further explained that the allotment from each member's dues is not always exactly 60% of the dues, but that it depends on the type of membership. Mr. Weins then explained the different types of membership and their allocations under the formula and discussion followed on this point.

Miss Ridgway pointed out that in the whole arrangement that is being proposed by the A.L.A. for the divisions there is not only the change in the allocation of dues but there are also services to be taken over by the Division, which are now carried by the general A.L.A. budget, such as Services and Supplies. Mention was also made that although the Division will be taking on additional responsibilities the 40% of the dues that the A.L.A. keeps supplies additional services and publications that are important to the Division.

Discussion followed regarding the need for more members to check the Public Libraries Division on their division slips. Mr. Weins mentioned that the new 1952 membership card will indicate whether the person belongs to a division or not. It was pointed out that one chief expense of the A.L.A., which will not be borne by the Division, is the maintenance of membership records.

Mr. Brigham stated that Public Libraries will be a division publication serving all sections and committees. It will be a general division expense, not a section expense. At the July 14 meeting there will be action on standing committees, etc.

Reference Librarians Section. The point was brought up that the Public Libraries Division does not offer anything for reference librarians and the suggestion was made that in the new organization there be some interests for them. Miss Ridgway mentioned that Mr. Nourse had tried to create a section for reference librarians within the old Division of Public Libraries and that exactly nine persons had responded. However, the new By-Laws do provide for such a section if it is desired. The suggestion was made that there be programs that would attract both children's and reference librarians to the Division.

Membership. John Henderson asked about the reported loss of 1,000 division members in 1950. Miss Ridgway cleared up this matter by pointing out that while 1,000 individual persons did not renew membership in the old Division of Public Libraries, new members did join, so that the net loss was not 1,000 persons. The question was asked how this compared with the total A.L.A. membership. Mr. Weins replied that there was no comparison; that A.L.A. loses about 1,300 individuals each year but gains about 2,600-3,000 new members. There is a very definite net gain each year. The suggestion was offered that there be a follow-up on members who have not rejoined to see why they have not renewed their membership in the division. Mr. Brigham mentioned that Miss Beatty's office has a schedule of follow-up on persons who have not renewed their membership. Discussion followed regarding A.L.A. and S.L.A. memberships and reasons why reference librarians are leaving A.L.A. for S.L.A. and it was generally agreed that there should be special programs to keep these people interested in A.L.A. It was suggested that the Division minimize time spent on business and have more program meetings to attract these people, and also that a membership committee might get in touch with those members who have not checked a division after the person has joined. Mr. Weins stated that it is possible for a member who has joined A.L.A. without designating a division to notify A.L.A. later that he wishes to join a division, but that about 90% of A.L.A. members do join a division. There was also a suggestion that membership committee members on a state and local level should urge librarians to designate a division when joining the A.L.A., and that at the general membership meeting the point be brought out that membership in a division of A.L.A. is important.

Executive Secretary. Mr. Brigham then discussed the problem of finding a successor to Miss Ridgway when she leaves A.L.A. on September 15 and that the Board would welcome suggestions for prospects. He called on Miss Ridgway for a report of the activities of the Public Library Executive Office and for a comment on her new job and plans.

Miss Ridgway stressed the importance of a strong A.L.A. and the need for all Divisions to contribute to rather than detract from the further strengthening of the national professional organization. She also recognized, however, that the present reorganization of A.L.A. places a greater responsibility upon the new Public Libraries Division to serve public library interests than any of the merging divisions have ever had to take before and at a time when public library needs are very great.

Miss Ridgway indicated that while her contribution would now be to strengthen the state library extension agency and the state library program in Connecticut, she expected to remain an interested and active member of A. L. A. and of its new Public Libraries Division.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Helen A. Ridgway

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Acting Executive Secretary
Public Libraries Division