

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION PUBLIC LIBRARIES DIVISION

Notes on the Meeting, Division Organization Committee
September 16-17, 1955, ALA Headquarters, Chicago
Written by S. Janice Kee

PRESENT: All members of the Committee: Ruth Rutzen, Jack B. Spear, Mrs. A.W. Errett, Francis R. St. John, Dorothy Deininger and Ruth W. Gregory, Chairman.
Officers and Staff: Mildred W. Sandoe, Harold W. Tucker, S. Janice Kee and Dorothy K. Smith.
Others: David H. Clift, Mildred Batchelder, Orcena D. Mahoney and Helen T. Geer (These were present only during the first hour of the meeting).

Ruth W. Gregory, Chairman of the Committee, presided. The meeting opened at 10 A.M. with introductory statements from President Sandoe and ALA Executive Secretary Clift. Miss Sandoe spoke of the importance of the task assigned to the Committee, that of stating a field of interest, for the proposed Public Libraries Association.

Miss Gregory called upon Mr. Clift to explain the steps contemplated by the ALA in implementing the recommendations of the Management Survey. He announced the plan of the ALA Steering Committee to meet at Headquarters on November 10-11 to begin their work by first reviewing statements of field of interest now in preparation by various ALA units.. He said it had been decided that existing ALA Committees would be employed whenever possible in the implementation process; for instance, the ALA Finance Committee has been asked to begin study leading to a definition of "administrative" and "program" items, and the ALA Committee on Boards and Committees will begin a study of board and committee structure and function in the terms outlined in the Survey. He said a sub-committee of the Steering Committee (Miss Ridgway, Mr. Shaw and Mr. Metcalf) would study qualification, terms of office, method of election, etc., of the members of the General Assembly and Executive Committee of the General Assembly. It was Mr. Clift's opinion that the ALA Steering Committee would plan special sessions during the Midwinter Conference and would meet again in the spring. He thought the Divisions could expect advice and instructions from the Committee; the ALA Committee hopes to return the field of interest statements submitted by November 7 with comments; he felt this committee could not avoid the responsibilities of resolution if problems arise.

Miss Gregory called for a discussion of the surveyors' recommendation that the Public Libraries Association (as well as all divisions) be "clearly distinct from that of any other division" and be "exclusive" in its field of interest. It was readily agreed that the objectives and interests of an organization of public librarians would parallel the objectives and interests of a public library; therefore the PLA's field of interest statement would be broad in scope. It was pointed out that the surveyors had recommended that "each division be delegated authority to act for the ALA as a whole on all matters related exclusively to the field of interest of the division." The question of the relation of the type of library to its types of work was discussed briefly, and the need for making clearer the relationship of Councils to Associations was recognized. Also it was recognized that the "exclusivity" might have to be negotiated in joint meetings of the Steering Committee and proposed Associations and Councils. Possibly arbitrary decision would be made.

Miss Rutzen said she saw most of the work of Councils to be in support of the Association, the latter being the finally responsible agencies. She emphasized her belief that Councils could not have ends in themselves. In other words, public service, in the broad sense, should be the objective of the Associations, while implementation of these services should be the objectives of Councils. Mr. St. John, in recognition of the problem of establishing a satisfactory working relationship between Councils and Associations, said many of the problems may be resolved when the mechanics are worked out. He reminded the group that the aim of the Survey was to make it possible for the American Library Association to get a job done by delegating responsibility to responsibility to the appropriate unit. The Survey does not recommend re-organization of ALA in the full sense, but rather a shifting of responsibilities in the interest of good administration and service.

Mrs. Errett, a library trustee, said, although the Trustees' section of PLD might not be ready now to consider a different organizational status in the ALA and PLA, it might be a suitable consideration for the members some time later. It was decided the ALA Steering Committee would be informed by Mr. Clift not to ask the Trustees' section and Armed Forces Section to submit a field of interest statement, but that Miss Gregory would approach these groups on this matter.

Mrs. Mahoney told of the establishment of a Committee in the Division of Cataloging and Classification to determine the field of interest of that group. Miss Batchelder mentioned the need for the PLA to recognize in its field of interest statement work with children and young people in public libraries. She regretted that the PLD Division Organization Committee did not include "staff" librarians, but only administrators. Miss Geer reported for the Hospital Division, saying it was her understanding that this group expected to become a new Council.

Miss Gregory raised the question of procedure in involving public librarians from Divisions other than PLD in the preparation of its field of interest statement. Mrs. Mahoney said the DCC Committee mentioned above might speak for DCC public librarian members, while Miss Batchelder mentioned the DLCYP Board.

A discussion of the extent of circularization of the draft of PLA's field of interest statement followed. To a majority of the Committee members, and to Mr. Clift, it seemed unnecessary to attempt more than minimum circularization of the draft before it went to the ALA Steering Committee on November 7. Mr. Clift said the Steering Committee would not expect to receive statements that had been prepared by more than one unit; time for coordination and wide circularization had not been allowed. Any circularization should be for the purpose of clarification and advice, not necessarily for concurrence, Mr. Clift said.

Meetings for discussion of statements at the Midwinter Conference were recognized as possible, and perhaps desirable. Miss Rutzen suggested possible test discussions of the statement by the staff associations of Detroit, Queens Borough, Brooklyn, before November 7. Mr. Clift urged the Committee to pass on to ALA Steering Committee any suggestions they might have to offer regarding their time table, procedures, etc.

It was generally agreed that units of the ALA would not make any changes related to the implementation in Constitution and By-Laws until after the ALA Constitution and By-Laws have been altered.

After the coffee break the PLD officers and staff members, with the Committee, tackled the questions, "What kind of public library organization do we want?" and "How do we approach our task of stating its exclusive interest?" Miss Gregory had prepared two working papers; Miss Rutzen had drafted one. After considerable discussion it was agreed that: 1) The group must look to the future, forgetting the present PLD; 2) The objectives of a public libraries organization parallel the objectives of the public library; 3) A broad statement of public libraries objectives should precede the field of interest statement of the Association; 4) The preliminary statement of the revision of Post-War Standards should be considered; 5) Note should be made of all public library interests now identified in the various units of ALA.

The working papers, produced by Miss Gregory and Miss Rutzen were used as a basis for the discussion during the afternoon. Three small groups worked separately during the evening, preparing parts of the statement. On Saturday morning the statement was discussed by the total group. It was agreed, just before the meeting adjourned at noon Saturday, that:

- 1) The committee's work on the statement would be duplicated by the Chairman and sent to Committee members for approval before any other use was made of it.
- 2) The statement would be submitted to the PLD Board of Directors for approval in principle before it was given over to the ALA Steering Committee on November 7.
- 3) The Executive Secretary would consult the Executive Secretaries of DLCYP and DCC and be authorized to furnish copies of the statement to them for review by governing bodies or Committees within those Divisions.
- 4) Plans would be made for discussion of the field of interest statement by the Board of Directors, ALA Councilors, representing PLD, and Committee Chairmen during the Midwinter Conference, perhaps in a membership meeting.

The statement, as drawn up by the Committee with Miss Sandoe, Mr. Tucker, Miss Kee and Mrs. Smith, is attached.