

**Public Library Association
Board of Directors—Spring Meeting
May 6, 2018 – 11am – 5pm
Washington, DC**

DRAFT Board Actions

Present: Pam Sandlian Smith, President; Felton Thomas, Past President; Monique le Conge Ziesenhenné, President-elect; Directors at Large: Rhea Brown Lawson (by phone), Michelle Jeske, Richard Kong, Gina Millsap, Carrie Plymire, Tracy Strobel; Stephanie Chase, ALA Division Councilor

PLA Staff: Barb Macikas, Executive Director; Scott Allen, Deputy Director; Nellie Barrett, Program Coordinator; Larra Clark, Deputy Director

Guests: Clara Bohrer, PLA Budget and Finance Committee Chairperson

1. **Welcome and Introductions**, *Pam Sandlian Smith*.
2. **By consent, approved** the 2018 Midwinter Board Meeting Draft Actions (2018.62).
3. **By consent, removed** the PLA Legislation and Advocacy Committee Update (2018.71) from the consent agenda and **approved** the consent agenda as revised.

Consent Items

Document Number

a. 2018 Midwinter Board Follow-Up Items.....	2018.63
b. ALA National Library Legislative Day Agenda	
c. PLA Committees, Semi-annual Reports.....	2018.64
d. Inclusive Internship Initiative Update	2018.65
e. ALA Connect Launch.....	2018.66
f. Continuing Education Status Report	2018.67
g. PLA Leadership Academy-Model Revision Process	2018.68
h. ALA Policy Corps Update	2018.69
i. Project Outcome Update.....	2018.70

Action/Discussion/Decision Items

4. **PLA Legislation and Advocacy Committee Update**, Clark (2018.71). Over the last year, the PLA Legislation and Advocacy Committee was charged with considering how PLA can engage more strategically with federal agency and national association partners. Committee members enthusiastically support the new direction and have proposed a new committee name (Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships) and charge. It was moved and **approved** that the committee name and charge be revised as presented. Board members discussed the need to continue legislative advocacy work, noting that this committee (despite its name) was never leading that work for PLA, and that staff and other members continue to liaise with the ALA Washington Office effectively.
5. **PLA President’s Report**, *Smith* (no document). Smith reported on her participation in two meetings held by the University of Washington iSchool, one focused on design thinking and the second reporting on the Community Driven Learning project, which was the culmination of Susan Hildreth’s time as the iSchool’s first Distinguished Practitioner in Residence. The latter meeting echoed themes previously

raised within PLA, about shifts in library school education to address issues such as customer service, community partnerships, and more. Public library leaders in attendance were supportive of this shift, but library school faculty cited structural and administrative barriers to changing the curricula and student experiences. After discussion, the board agreed that PLA should consider strategies to survey libraries about the number of non librarians being hired or considered for executive positions and related issues (job posting language, barriers to hiring non-MLS degreed staff, training strategies, etc.). Such data might confirm impressions that hiring from outside the library field is more common and lead to product ideas, such as a “library bootcamp” to help staff from other sectors learn library basics while on the job. The board also noted that more research is needed on the concept of “libraries as learning places” in order to confirm public library impact on educational success and raise the profile of libraries with academics. Smith also reported on work her library is doing to prepare for a fall 2018 ballot initiative for funding, and her board/staff trip to visit the Dokk1 library in Aarhus, Denmark.

6. **Results of 2018 PLA Elections, 2019 Nominating Report, Thomas** (2018.72). Thomas recapped the recent PLA elections, noting the number of PLA members voting was up significantly and explaining the process followed by ALA in the event of a tie. Confirmed members of the 2019 Nominating Committee include Thomas, Michelle Jeske, and Larry Neal, and others are being sought.
7. **Report on IFLA President’s Meeting and IFLA North American Convening, Thomas, Bohrer, Macikas** (2018.73). PLA’s participation in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) President’s Meeting (Barcelona, Spain in March) and the North American convening (Ottawa, Canada in April) was noted. IFLA’s Global Visioning project collected 22,000 votes from 213 countries. PLA leaders agreed U.S. libraries could embrace and support the resulting 10 highlights and 10 opportunities addressed in the IFLA report. It was suggested PLA promote the report further, and also highlight examples of how libraries globally are achieving results with very limited resources. The President’s Meeting and seven regional convenings are employing a strategy to engage small groups in brainstorming ideas for implementation. PLA leaders were pleased that sharing and learning from each other, rather than developing new and potentially duplicative programs, was being stressed. The concept of PLA sharing its work globally was discussed. Board members emphasized the need to be collaborative and to highlight that U.S. libraries can both share with and learn from libraries in other countries. The concept of moving U.S. libraries from having either no concern or relationship with the global public library community, or having limited interaction (for instance, collaboration with a “sister city” library), to actively learning from and sharing with non-U.S. library partners was discussed. PLA and our member libraries have a significant knowledge gap, in terms of knowing which countries are most open to sharing and how to best make connections and partnerships. Ideas discussed included coordinating U.S. librarians to visit libraries in other countries, learning from academics who may be more inclined to visit and learn from counterparts around the world, and including more international programming at PLA and ALA conferences.
8. **PLA 2018 Conference Preliminary Report, Macikas, all** (2018.74a-b). Overall conference evaluation results were very positive, and all conference activity was held successfully despite weather-related challenges. PLA estimates the weather prevented about 500 people from attending. PLA’s substantial efforts to address the weather situation were reviewed and included live streaming major speakers, allowing access to the virtual conference for all registrants, and offering canceled programs as post-even webinars. The issue of registration refunds was discussed. In terms of precedent, PLA has processed refunds in the past when individuals requested them in advance with reasonable justification, such as a medical or family issue. PLA has not honored refund requests during or after the event. For PLA 2018,

staff declined about 100 requests for refunds after the conference, and about a dozen of those individuals have continued to express displeasure at PLA's policy. The board considered if PLA should offer the 500 who didn't attend, or a subset of them, refunds or other accommodations, such as a discount on the PLA 2020 conference, but decided against it for many reasons. The board recommended that PLA policy about refunds, cancellations and weather be clarified and that PLA ensure its practices are in alignment with other associations.

9. **Financial Reports**, *Macikas, Allen* (2018.75a-b, 2018.76a-c, 2018.77).
 - a. Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18): Bohrer reported on the status of FY18 as of February 2018, noting that PLA is on track for revenue and that expenses will be on or under budget. Conference results will be realized by May 2018, and net revenue will be low compared to past events due to high venue costs and decisions such as increasing food in the exhibit hall to drive traffic. PLA will provide ALA with about \$1.3 million in overhead in FY18. Bohrer reminded the board that the Budget and Finance Committee will make recommendations at the June board meeting for use of the anticipated \$40-50,000 in PLA's long-term investment interest. Ideas for consideration included international work, research on library educational outcomes, project related to library staffing issues, or development of a family engagement curriculum.
 - b. FY19 budget: The PLA FY19 budget presented, based on a very preliminary draft, showed a \$900,000+ net loss. Subsequent revisions will reduce this number to \$700,000 or lower, and a revised budget will be presented at the June board meeting for approval.
 - c. Grant interest income: Bohrer and Macikas held a meeting with ALA chief financial officer Mark Leon to confirm how PLA's large grant assets (totaling over \$11 million from both the legacy grant and the \$2.9 million general operating grant) will be invested. ALA confirmed the legacy grant cash is being invested with Huntington Bank (chosen from among multiple bidders) using a CD laddering strategy that will secure returns of 1-4% on the funds, with those being held for later use earning more. The \$2.9 million grant is subject to different terms and spending timelines and will remain accessible as cash.

10. **ALA Financial/Organizational Status** (2018.78a-d). The board discussed the proposal to approve an "investment budget" (which includes a net loss) for ALA's 2019 fiscal year, efforts to evaluate ALA's office space and real estate options, the hiring of consultants to review ALA's organizational structure, the future of the ALA Midwinter Meeting, and the need for PLA to do scenario planning to be prepared for impending changes.

Reasons to support ALA's intent to pass an investment budget were enumerated. The 2008 recession required associations to make major changes. ALA's changes, however, were not sufficient nor strategic. ALA made across-the-board budget cuts and allowed staff to shrink, while avoiding major changes to ALA structure, operations and member expectations that might have saved money, streamlined operations, and better prepared the organization for future crises. Therefore, ALA survived the recession, but fell behind in terms of information technology infrastructure, and remains saddled with an unwieldy structure that inefficiently attempts to serve every member's unique interests and needs. The PLA board also expressed hope that the planned governance and organizational structure review will result in "right sizing" and better alignment of ALA's activities to the ALA mission. The oversight body for this work has been defined but not appointed, and PLA board members expressed concern that, as usual, composition of the oversight body has been defined with a priority on giving "equal input" to various ALA factions rather than consideration of who might be best suited to provide such

input. Board members voiced support for ALA to hire an external consultant who will bring new perspectives to the analysis and will not be beholden to any ALA factions or traditions.

ALA's balance sheet and assets are strong, and key investments in IT, fundraising and advocacy have the potential to raise revenue and bring ALA capacity up to date. Concern was expressed, however, that each investment must include measures of success and expectations for return on investment, which should be public and monitored by all ALA leaders. Concern was also expressed about the capacity of ALA to use the increased funding appropriately. While the board had few concerns about investments in the Development and Washington Offices, ongoing IT challenges and the recent experience launching ALA Connect have suggested that ALA's IT infrastructure is not prepared to receive and successfully manage the increased funding. Furthermore, the last IT audit, which was not extensive and resulted in little more than an inventory, may not provide a strong roadmap for the new investments.

It was agreed PLA would develop a position statement in support of the investment budget but providing PLA input on concerns and expectations. The position statement will be shared with other ALA divisions, to encourage them to sign on or craft similar statements, and also with public library staff serving on ALA Council and Executive Board, so that they can better represent PLA in future discussions and votes.

The fact that all these critical issues are being considered by ALA leadership simultaneously and with urgency suggested that PLA should reevaluate how we give input to the Executive Board and Council. In the short term, PLA needs to communicate with PLA members who are ALA Councilors during the ALA 2018 Annual Conference in New Orleans, so that they know about these discussions and PLA's concerns before voting on the FY19 budget ceiling or taking other actions. PLA should also keep leveraging its relationship with other ALA divisions, sharing our positions and concerns and encouraging other division Executive Directors to circulate and potentially echo them. Creating these communication loops, not just with the ALA Executive Board and Council but potentially with other PLA friends serving on various ALA committees, could serve PLA well now and in the future. In the long term, PLA needs to determine strategies to get more PLA members onto ALA bodies to "represent" PLA. Those members need to be educated regularly about the conversations and concerns of the PLA board. Supporting PLA members to run, getting them elected, and encouraging them to stay on Council and be vocal are difficult challenges, however. Discussion ended with the suggestion to add goals related to internal ALA communication and advocacy to the strategic plan, and the concept of expanding the purview of the PLA Nominating Committee to consider not just PLA candidates but candidates who might run for ALA Council and other ALA bodies.

The board also discussed the ALA Midwinter Meeting and agreed it should be eliminated. The Youth Media Awards are a critical component of Midwinter. However, the board supported disengaging them from Midwinter and holding them in New York City, which offers better potential for national media exposure and involvement of publishers. The recent addition of educational content to Midwinter via the Symposium on the Future of Libraries was also seen as positive, however the board felt that ALA members would be better served by improving the educational content at the ALA Annual Conference and also considering how to do more local and regional events (which could increase revenue, better engage members, and enlist new members).

Finally, the board agreed a better, shared understanding of PLA's legal status as an entity within ALA, and the agreements that regulate that relationship, is needed.

11. **Proposed changes to PLA board structure**, *Macikas, all* (2018.79a-b). The proposal to revise the PLA bylaws to add a fiscal officer position to the PLA board was discussed. The new fiscal officer would also automatically serve as chair of the PLA Budget and Finance Committee and could be charged with participating in the ALA Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC). Members agreed the position was needed and noted the potential benefits. They discussed strategies to fill the position, via either election or appointment, with a member who has sufficient financial expertise. It was suggested that the chief financial officers of large library systems might have strong qualifications but may not be PLA members, interested in running, or supported financially to participate if elected. It was moved and **approved** to proceed with the concept of adding a fiscal officer position to the PLA board. Staff will develop language for the position, including text for the PLA 2019 ballot, for review at the June 2018 board meeting.
12. **Review of next iteration of PLA Strategic Plan**, *Macikas, all* (2018.80a-b). Members reviewed the draft of the PLA 2018-2020 strategic plan, which reflected board comments, feedback from focus groups of members-at-large held at the PLA conference, and input from the brief PLA member survey. The input resulted in adding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to the core values and posing the question about whether or not social justice should be explicitly included in the document. Kong agreed to poll the EDI Task Force for their input on including social justice. Otherwise, board members agreed to remove the early reference to “North America’s library staff,” consider where to insert new language to reflect PLA’s new intentions to share with and learn from public libraries globally, and extend the time frame of the new plan to 2022. As part of the discussion, promoting the strategy of establishing special taxing districts to support libraries was encouraged as part of the plan’s advocacy activities.
13. **From Awareness to Funding Report Project**, *Clark* (2018.81). Clark reviewed recent activity to promote the survey results, including a program at the PLA conference, a webinar and a new FaceBook group. Findings from the survey were briefly discussed, focusing on the continued public ignorance about how libraries are funded and the decreased perception of library value among families with children. Suggestions included continuing to present the survey results broadly via conferences and webinars; developing talking points for library directors to present the survey results and action steps to their staff, board and community; creating case studies of libraries to serve as examples for how libraries can address survey findings; and developing tools and talking points that help PLA and libraries change the perception of families about the value of library services and programs. It was also suggested PLA provide libraries with tools to recreate the survey at the community level, because community level results may be different. It was noted that Larry Neal may have experience doing this.
14. **2020 US Census Update**, *Clark* (2018.82a-b). Clark reported on ALA efforts to connect with the U.S. Census Bureau in partnership around the 2020 Census. A brief presentation was held at the PLA 2018 conference, and Census Bureau staff will exhibit at the ALA 2018 Annual Conference. The board agreed that public library staff will have both questions about and opportunities related to the 2020 Census, and that further action is warranted. Certain states are approving funding for census outreach which may be accessible to libraries. It was moved and **approved** that PLA will support efforts to prepare librarians for the 2020 Census and jointly establish the 2020 Census Library Outreach and Education Taskforce with the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy, drawing from PLA and ALA members at large. On related notes, Clark reported that ALA is part of a coalition advocating around census policy and process issues, for instance by objecting to the recently proposed citizenship question.

15. **PLA Legacy Grant Update/Sustainability Plan**, *Macikas, Allen, all.* (2018.83, 2018.84, 2018.85, 2018.86).
It was reported that PLA received the balance of the legacy grant funding based on successful submission of phase 1 deliverable reports. Staff is meeting soon to revisit phase 2 deliverables and make specific plans for activity. A major component of the legacy grant is planning for sustainability, including efforts to improve fundraising from vendors, foundations, government and individuals. Bohrer was acknowledged for her excellent work recruiting PLA past presidents and other leaders to be “founding” donors of PLA’s emerging individual giving campaign. It was reported that over \$18,000 has been raised, and with corporate and grant matches, PLA will be able to announce the founding donor campaign has raised over \$100,000 by the time of the launch at the 2018 Annual Conference member breakfast. Plans for the launch were discussed. The name and purpose of the program will be refined and promoted, and PLA leaders and founding donors will be tasked with being “table captains” during the event. Board members supported the concept that the fund would support strategic initiatives generally, with specific allocations determined periodically by the board. Staff will continue to develop plans for the launch and post-launch appeals, soliciting input from board members as needed.
16. **Fall Board Meeting Dates.** The fall 2018 PLA board meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2018.
17. **Adjournment.** There being no new business, it was moved and **approved** to adjourn the meeting at 4:45pm.