

### Section 3 – Discussion Groups

#### **Discussion Groups**

Discussion groups are formed to exchange information around topics of interest to members. They can be formed either at the division or the section level. To start a discussion group, at least 15 members must inform the executive director of the group/purpose. The group is approved by the LLAMA Board, as well as a section Executive Committee if the group is to be placed within a section.

After each Annual Conference, either the section chair or a discussion group member must provide LLAMA staff ([llama@ala.org](mailto:llama@ala.org)) with the name of the new discussion group chair.

**It is critical that each discussion group has a chair because he/she will be the contact person for scheduling meetings and guiding the group at conferences. If a discussion group does not self-identify a chair and staff cannot determine who the chair is, the discussion group will be de-listed from the LLAMA web site and not have space reserved at the conference.**

#### Meetings at Conferences

Discussion groups meet at the ALA conferences. Before each conference LLAMA staff will contact discussion group chairs to schedule the meeting and to check on DG topics/content for the upcoming conference. Staff will publicize the topic to encourage DG participation.

#### Virtual Meetings

Discussion groups are encouraged to occasionally meet online, so members who can't attend a conference can still participate in the DG. Groups that have had a lively discussion and/or a well-attended meeting at conference are particularly encouraged to take the discussion online. LLAMA staff is available to help DG chairs schedule their online session, market it to members, and provide technical support, through GoTo Webinar.



## Leadership Orientation

### **FY16-17 Division and Section Level Discussion Groups**

Following are the current LLAMA/Section discussion groups. Follow the link to see committee charges and members. For member contact information, login to the ALA website.

#### LLAMA Discussion Groups

- Dialogue with Directors - [Roster](#)
- Diversity Officers - [Roster](#)
- Women Administrators - [Roster](#)

#### Assessment Section Discussion Groups

- Hot Topics in Assessment Discussion Group - [Roster](#)

#### Buildings and Equipment Section Discussion Groups

- Library Facilities Planning - [Roster](#)
- Library Interiors - [Roster](#)
- Library Storage - [Roster](#)

#### Fund Raising and Financial Development Section Discussion Groups

- Development Issues - [Roster](#)

#### Human Resources Section Discussion Groups

- Emerging Trends - [Roster](#)

#### Library Organization and Management Section Discussion Groups

- Fiscal & Business Officers Discussion Group - [Roster](#)
- Middle Management Discussion Group - [Roster](#)

#### Systems and Services Section Discussion Groups

- Circulation/Access Services - [Roster](#)

### **Discussion Group Best Practices as used for Dialogue with Directors**

Dialogue with Directors is a Discussion Group designed to allow people to have conversations with "directors". It is not designed just for directors. Topics cover everything imaginable. I founded it and have chair it since 2005. We typically have 20-40 people in attendance at both Annual and Midwinter. Smallest attendance was maybe 8-10 and one meeting we did have over 100 people in attendance. Attendees are typically split evenly between 3 groups: upper administration, middle managers, and the on the ground/students/new to the field. Topics are about hot issues, areas of concern, challenges faces, ways to handle issues, sharing of strategies, etc. Issues cover the spectrum from HR, facilities, money, getting a promotion, determining what bosses want to see in employees, fundraising, politics of libraries, etc.

Process followed:

- I put out regular calls for "directors" - i.e. those with experiences to share, to attend.
- No presentations or content is prepared.
- Start promoting meeting (location, time, and purpose) about one month before. It includes a call for topics, but no responses are required to be successful.
- What is said in the meeting room stays in the meeting room.
- Summary notes are posted to ALA Connect that highlight topics covers, best practices, tips to success, mentions of resources, etc. Organizations, names, etc, are never included unless someone says "you can include my organization's name".
- Discussion list is maintained solely for announcements of meetings and minutes availability. Group decided to not use it to discuss virtually due to the confidentiality and sensitivity of some topics.
- Minutes posted within one month of meetings.
- Rooms is set up with a large table that all can sit around. Everyone participates in the a single discussions rather than splitting up into smaller groups. Some people just like to listen. Also in the large group, people feed off each others questions and discussion. It all "directors" to provide advice to all.
- We start with a reminder of what the discussion group and some basic ground rules.
- Privacy is maintained in the room.
- All are given a chance to listen and speak as they feel comfortable.
- We go around the room to do introductions that includes name, title, organizations, and proposed topics.
- I collect the proposed topics and revisit the list throughout the session to interject new directions and pick up the energy as the one topic is discussed to completion. I use the conversation to judge the order of topics so a natural progression happens.



## Leadership Orientation

- I take basic notes that later are shared.
- I pass a sign in sheet so I can report how many people attended.
- I help to call all people so that no one can monopolize the meeting, the quieter folks can get involved, and people are not talking over each other. If people are participating without stepping on each other, I can just let the conversation progress naturally.
- Last 15 minutes are saved for topics thought of during the meeting or if someone wants to recycle back on a topic.

I hope this helps others.

Credit:

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