

ALA Task Force on Electronic Member Participation  
Final Report, Midwinter, 2009

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1. Organization of this report

The number and variety of issues associated with electronic participation is huge, intertwined, and related to each other in different ways. In considering any of these issues, it is tempting to follow paths as they open up, and thereby to miss important descriptions and rationales that may be articulated later in connection with a different issue. In order to counteract this temptation, and to minimize the need for backtracking, this report is ordered as follows:

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2. Formation of the Task Force

The Task Force on Electronic Member Participation (TFOEMP) was formed following the Annual Conference, in August, 2007, in accordance with a vote of Council, following up on a recommendation of the Committee on Organization (in ALA CD #27.1, Item 2).

Some of the underlying reasons for pursuing greater electronic participation included:

- A desire to increase opportunities for ALA members to participate in the business of the organization
- A desire to increase the opportunities for ALA members to derive benefit from their membership
- A desire to enable ALA members for whom (for whatever reason) travel is a hardship, to participate more fully in the business of the organization, or to partake of its offerings.
- A desire to increase the effectiveness of the organization (with subsidiary results including the possibility of decreasing the length of conferences, decreasing conflicts at conferences, etc.)

**The charge to the Task Force is as follows:**

**To examine existing documents and develop recommendations to adapt ALA policies to help the Association move forward with effective e-participation practices; to survey current and planned e-participation throughout the ALA and its units; to explore, in consultation with BARC, the financial implications of expanded e-participation; and to report its findings to the ALA Council at the 2009 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Denver, CO.**

### **3. Task Force Operations**

TFOEMP activities have been conducted as openly as has been feasible. In addition to face-to-face meetings at conferences, TFOEMP held three telephone conference calls, each of which was registered and summarized on the ALA Website in accordance with policy. The Task Force has a presence on the ALA Web pages at <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/governance/council/committees/tfoemp.cfm>. The TFOEMP electronic discussion list has been open to view, as were its discussions on Moodle, a classroom software program hosted by ALA. Some shared document writing was done on Google Docs, and a survey of members was conducted on SurveyMonkey.

#### **3.1 Communication with other ALA offices and units**

- **BARC.** A Task Force member served as liaison to the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC), making certain that BARC was apprised of TFOEMP's progress and direction. It proved impossible to interweave fiscal considerations with other issues during TF discussions. Instead, the TF forwarded its draft recommendations in time for them to be discussed at BARC's fall, 2008 meeting. This report reflects some of the feedback received as a result of that meeting.
- **COO.** A Task Force member served as liaison to the Committee on Organization (COO), providing information to them about issues requiring COO attention. Comments from COO are reflected in this report
- **Constitution & Bylaws; Policy Monitoring.** TFOEMP referred several matters related to its recommendations to the Constitution & Bylaws and Policy Monitoring Committees. It is anticipated that Constitution & Bylaws will be bringing several recommendations forward for action at Midwinter.
- **ITTS.** Jenny Levine of ALA staff, served as liaison to TFOEMP for matters where TFOEMP required information about electronic capabilities or options.
- **Membership.** John Chrastka of ALA staff served as liaison to TFOEMP, particularly regarding matters of ALA membership support services.
- **Council Secretariat.** Lois Ann Gregory Wood was the primary staff liaison for TFOEMP, providing services, support, and answers on myriad topics.

**3.2 Communication with Council.** TFOEMP communicated directly with Council via the Council List, sending a number of "Issue Messages" outlining a particular area of concern, describing tentative conclusions, and requesting Council input. In September, 2008, a set of draft

recommendations was sent to the Council List. An initial draft of this final report was sent to Council in December, 2008.

**3.3 Communication with Membership.** The Chair of TFOEMP participated as part of a panel on electronic participation at both Membership Meetings held during the 2008 Annual Conference.

## 4. Scope of Work

### 4.1 What is “e-participation” and what is within the Task Force Charge

The Task Force identified the following types of electronic interaction with the Association that might be conceivably considered “e-participation:”

- A. *Participation through attending non-governance programming* (workshops, pre-conferences, programs, addresses, etc.) electronically.
- B. *Participation in governance activities of committees*, task forces, boards, etc., ranging from passive observation to fully-participating membership. (business meetings and between-meeting activities of officers, boards, committees, task forces, interest groups, etc. at all levels in the Association; but not programs, receptions, and other non-business activities that may be sponsored by an organizational entity)
- C. *Participation through discussion in informal online communities* (online discussion lists, chat rooms, Second Life, etc.) enabled by the Association; but not directly arising from or connected to the work of a particular committee or other body and not arising from formal programming.
- D. *Carrying out administrative activities* such as membership and conference registration; voting through electronic means; online publishing, including ALA-hosted blogs
- E. *Participation in formal coursework and continuing education* offered online by the Association of any of its units.

Items A - C were agreed to be within the Task Force charge. TFOEMP concentrated primarily on A and B. D is largely outside the Task Force charge, although activities such as electronic voting, and allowing use of electronic signatures<sup>1</sup> overlap with some Task Force concerns, and ALA-hosted blogs have some relationship to online communities. E was considered to be entirely outside the area of Task Force concern, although it is recognized that modes of delivery and pricing models may in some cases be the same as those used for other activities.

Also outside the Task Force Charge were:

- Describing or recommending the particular form of the electronic future for the Association. Technological capabilities are changing so rapidly that any attempt to establish particular mechanisms, platforms, software, hardware, etc., would be useless.
- Developing fiscal models to reflect possible impact of implementation of individual recommendations. TFOEMP had neither the time, nor the particular expertise, nor the information to make this possible. It was felt that this activity is within the realm of BARC responsibilities, aided by ALA staff.
- Identifying, formulating, or establishing effective practices for e-participation. Nevertheless, some shared understanding of effective practices was essential to TF work.

### 4.2. Purposes and degrees of electronic participation

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<sup>1</sup> At the 2008 ALA Executive Board Fall Meeting, the Executive Board voted to “Support the use of electronic signatures wherever the ALA Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy Manual require members to petition for candidacy or other action.”

Because the issue of electronic participation is amorphous, and the parts are related to each other in different ways, identifying the types of participation within the TFOEMP charge and classifying them in a consistent way was essential to mapping out an approach to the work. After considerable discussion, three main Purposes and three Degrees of participation were settled upon. Each purpose might have all three degrees of participation, resulting in nine theoretically identifiable types of participation:

#### **4.2.1 Purposes of participation within the Task Force Charge**

- Participation in non-governance activities
- Participation in governance activities
- Participation in informal online communities

#### **4.2.2 Degrees of participation to be considered**

- Passive observation (e.g., read-only access to a committee discussion list; real-time transcripts of Council discussion; podcast of an awards ceremony; webcast of a speech)
- Some interaction (e.g., ability to join in an electronic discussion, but not vote; ability to submit questions to a conference speaker)
- Full participation (e.g., have live access to meetings, including ability to join in discussion in real time, and to vote)

This classification is not necessarily intuitive, but it was the method that enabled the TF to see critical similarities and essential differences, and to organize its early discussions. Fortunately, enough was learned through TFOEMP's consideration of the first several groups of purpose/type divisions that it was not necessary to follow through with separate discussion of all nine.

#### **4.2.3 Issues to be considered in connection with each purpose/degree division**

In its discussions of the different types and degrees of participation, TFOEMP members attempted to identify:

- A. What sorts of activities might be included in each group
- B. What changes might be necessary to the constitution, bylaws, or policies to allow this purpose/level of participation
- C. Tangible and intangible benefits, negative consequences, or other potential by-products of enabling this purpose/level of participation
- D. What types of equipment, software, or other technical or staff support might be necessary to enable this purpose/level of participation
- E. Possible financial implications of this purpose/level
- F. Whether there may be differences when considering association level activities versus division and/or roundtable activities

It became evident that TFOEMP would be unable to address all of these aspects of participation in its recommendations. It would be impossible to definitively determine D; E is the responsibility of BARC; F will need to be determined after a general course of action is agreed to. Nevertheless, considering all of these items during initial discussions informed TFOEMP's understanding of issues, and its eventual recommendations.

## 5.0 Issues related to provisions of the ALA Constitution, Bylaws, and Policies

### 5.1 Relevant provisions of the ALA Constitution, Bylaws, and Policies

- **Definition of a meeting. Policy 7.4.1.** A Meeting is an official assembly, for any length of time following a designated starting time, of the members of any board, committee, task force or commission, etc., during which the members do not separate except for a recess and in which the assembly has the capacity to formalize decisions. Conference calls, Internet chat sessions (and their equivalents), and in-person meetings are recognized as meeting subject to the open meetings policy (ALA Policy 7.4.4) (Asynchronous electronic discussions by electronic mail or other asynchronous communications methods do not constitute meetings because they are not an official assembly with a designated starting time.)
- **Virtual Members. Policy 6.16.1.** Definition of Virtual Members. Virtual members of committees or task forces have the right to attend meetings, participate in debate, and make motions. Virtual members are not counted in determining the quorum nor do they have the right to vote.
- **Open Meetings. Policy 7.4.4.** All meetings of the American Library Association and its units are open to all members and to members of the press. Registration requirements apply. Closed meetings may be held only for discussion of matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions. (See also “Current Reference File”: Interpretive Statement on Open Meetings Policy.)
- **Meeting Attendance. Policy 4.5.** Requirements for Committee Service. With the exception of virtual members, members, members of all ALA and unit committees are expected to attend all meetings. Failure to attend two consecutive meetings or groups of meetings (defined as all meetings of a committee that take place at one Midwinter Meeting or Annual Conference) without an explanation acceptable to the committee chair constitutes grounds for removal upon request by the chair to and approval of the appropriate appointing official or governing board
- **Voting without physical presence. Article VIII, Section 8.** Votes in the Executive Board, as well as in committees, may be taken by mail, electronic system, or conference call, provided that all members are canvassed simultaneously. An affirmative vote from two-thirds of a quorum of the body shall be required. Each committee shall have the authority to set a time limit within which the votes of its members shall be recorded, but if no such time limit is set no vote shall be counted unless received within 30 days from the day the text of the matter voted upon was mailed properly addressed to those entitled to vote on the matter involved. **Also Article X, Section 2.** Voting by mail shall be deemed to be by postal services or electronic means as determined by the executive director who shall be responsible for ensuring the integrity of the ballot.

### 5.2 Basic findings regarding provisions of ALA Constitution, Bylaws, and policies

- A. There are no policy impediments to providing electronic participation opportunities to any non-governance Association activity.
- B. There are issues of longstanding practice connected to e-participation in non-governance activities that are mainly fiscal in nature rather than matters of policy (e.g., practices connected to conference attendance and exhibits).
- C. There are significant policy impediments to certain kinds of e-participation in governance activities.

- D. The Open Meetings Policy applies only to meetings and not to asynchronous activities. It does not guarantee that observation of meetings is free of cost. It is currently silent on the issue of whether it applies only to physical presence, or encompasses virtual presence.
- E. There are ambiguities and/or omissions in the bylaws and policies that may be interpreted to permit certain kinds of electronic participation. For example, neither the bylaws nor the policy manual specify what is meant by “present” or “attendance.” Similarly, “open” and “closed” as applied to meetings are not defined.
- F. A meeting may be all or partly face-to-face or virtual.
- G. If full participation in synchronous meetings is available electronically, there is no compelling need to distinguish between members of a body who attend meetings physically and those who attend virtually.
- H. If there ceases to be a policy distinction between physical and virtual membership on committees, a variety of parliamentary and organizational issues must be addressed, including, but not limited to: size of committees; determination of the quorum; current provisions of the Bylaws regarding voting without physical presence must be addressed.

## **6. Survey of members and of ALA and its units**

TFOEMP concluded that a survey of ALA staff would not yield adequate information about what is actually being used, or wished. Accordingly, a voluntary survey of members was conducted, using Survey Monkey. In addition, division Executive Directors and round table Liaisons were asked about mechanisms for electronic participation that their units employed.

### **6.1 Survey of Members**

In June, 2008, the Task Force on Electronic Meeting Participation, working with staff of the American Library Association, conducted a 16-question survey of ALA members to gauge practices and attitudes about electronic participation in the work of the Association. The survey, broadcast through mailing lists, blogs, American Libraries Direct, and other means, received nearly 1,300 responses—a very strong response, indicating it touched a chord with ALA members. Furthermore, even questions toward the end of the survey received hundreds of responses, indicating that members were engaged in the topic. Finally, the survey received 369 responses – some quite passionate – in the final comment section.

The survey provided a revealing look at our Association in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Members appreciate face-to-face (“f2f”) opportunities such as Annual Conference and Midwinter Meetings, but they report conducting much Association work electronically (back to 1990, as one respondent tartly noted). Over 70% said that in the last five years they had not participated in any unit that had conducted its work exclusively face-to-face. Despite ALA policy and practice deterring fully-virtual participation, one in five respondents reported participating in ALA committees that conducted all work online.

Yet the increase in e-participation, whether hybrid or fully virtual, has not resulted in a corresponding drop in “f2f” activity, at least based on attendance data for annual conferences in the last ten years:

1999 New Orleans	22,598
2000 Chicago	24,913
2001 San Francisco	26,820
2002 Atlanta	21,130
2003 Toronto	17,570
2004 Orlando	19,546
2005 Chicago	27,962
2006 New Orleans	16,964
2007 Washington, D.C.	28,499 (all-time attendance record)
2008 Anaheim	22,047

The only correlations immediately suggested by this data is that conference attendance rises for popular tourism locations in urban areas not recently devastated by epidemics or natural disasters. Perhaps ALA members would rather ALA help them get most of the committee busy-work out of the way between annual conferences so they can allocate their limited travel funds to “going to Annual” knowing they can spend most of their three or four days attending interesting and informative programs, networking with peers, and visiting exhibits.

Attitudes toward Midwinter Meeting are far cooler. Enough respondents questioned the role of the Midwinter Meetings that any future assessment of virtual participation must meet that particular issue head-on. One of the more blunt responses summarized the input of other, more politic members in stating, “Having two live meetings a year is ridiculous.”

Many respondents referenced the financial toll of face-to-face participation, the environmental impact of holding two Association-wide face-to-face meetings every year, and the impracticality of using the handful of hours available at conferences to perform most or all Association work. The survey was conducted before the economic meltdown of fall 2008, and it is likely that concern about cost issues for ALA participation has increased since then.

While we include in the detailed analysis (Appendix A) representative comments from the fewer than ten respondents who argued for requiring face-to-face participation, overwhelmingly, members used the comments section to underscore their support of e-participation and their desire for fewer obstacles and more support for electronic engagement within the Association.

Many respondents appear unaware of (or perhaps unconcerned by) ALA policy limiting electronic participation and proscribing online voting within committees, and quite a few shrugged off the requirement to hold votes in person (ALA Policy 6.1) by noting that most ALA work is consensus-based rather than vote-driven. Several respondents noted that online work is more incremental, evolving, and collaborative, precluding the need to vote. E-participation has its challenges and its training curves; both chairs and members of committees with e-participants expressed some dissatisfaction with the experience. Nevertheless, this survey suggests members believe the gains greatly outweigh the losses.

The simpler technologies were by far the most popular, with email and phone at the top, though hundreds of members said they would use technologies such as Voice over IP (VOIP, or Internet telephony) if ALA provided support for these tools. This question alone raised interesting issues about ALA’s role in educating its members about tools for e-participation, as there are free tools for VOIP, such as Skype, that would require no intervention on ALA’s part, and there are other tools, such as web conferencing, that ALA makes available to members and that include VOIP. The question of whether ALA should provide tools or enable their usage and educate members came up in the comments, and should get close discussion.

In the earliest days of networked technologies, ALA members reasonably argued that “face-to-face” was fairer and more democratic because e-tools and the corresponding bandwidth to support them were largely only accessible to an elite few. It is obvious from the responses to the surveys and the many comments that attitudes have reversed for many ALA members. It is requiring members to allocate scarce travel funds to attend multiple on-site meetings per year that many now see as unfair—or as some respondents put it, “classist,” “elitist,” “irresponsible,” and less than “moral.” Virtual participation is increasingly seen as a democratizing tool that places engagement with our national professional association within reach of a much wider, more economically and demographically diverse swath of our membership—while also reducing ALA’s carbon footprint.

Finally, it is evident the vast majority of ALA members have accepted electronic engagement as a given of modern business practice (for newer members, e-participation is simply a welcome fact of life). Very few respondents expressed concern that some ALA members might not want to use e-participation tools (though several comments did express concern that technologies be accessible to the differently-abled and to low-bandwidth users).

A fuller analysis of survey results can be found in Appendix A. Because of the length of the TF report, and the length of the analysis, TFOEMP recommends that Appendix A be read online, and not distributed in print at Midwinter.

## **6.2 Division and Roundtable Use of E-Participation Mechanisms**

Divisions and roundtables have utilized a wide variety of electronic means for enabling participation in Association programming and business. These include, but are not limited to:

- Electronic discussion lists (either ALA-hosted, or hosted by members or other institutions, or utilizing a commercial platform)
- ALA Online Communities
- “Virtual conferences” (in which electronic access is provided to face-to-face conferences by enabling live viewing; posting papers and slides to a website; hosting chats and discussions of presentations, etc.)
- Electronic publications
- Podcasts
- Streaming and downloadable audio and video
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Second Life
- Official bloggers
- Posting papers or slides from programs to a Website
- Telephone conference calls
- Teleconferencing
- Classroom software
- Webinars
- Live chat
- Shared document creation sites (not hosted by ALA)
- And others

The mechanism chosen depends on such things as appropriateness to the particular purpose, convenience, availability of expertise to support it, availability of software, comfort/expertise of those who must use the mechanism, need for timeliness, need to archive, and cost.



The most commonly used electronic communication technology for governance activities is at present electronic discussion lists, but it is clear that the Association and its staff and members are willing to explore a multitude of options to provide electronic access to Association activities.

TFOEMP makes no recommendations about the suitability of particular technologies to particular purposes, nor about specific software or hardware. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of choices may in itself be a problem for the Association and its members as they move forward into a time of greater participation. Not only does it have an impact on the learning curve for members, and may thus have an impact on how fully some members will participate, but there is also a limit to how many different mechanisms ALA and its staff may be able to support, and to how much member support can be handled.

## **7. Online Communities**

In 2005, ALA introduced Online Communities to its members, providing a means by which members could gather together electronically into affinity groups. As originally envisioned, these groups would not be bound by ALA's organizational structure, nor would they have to be connected to existing committees, task forces, or boards. The groups would be purely a reflection of particular member interest. Fanciful examples were offered: Iguana-owning reference librarians; grammar fanatics; catalogers of restaurant place mats. Less fanciful examples were also offered: selectors of science fiction; building proctors dealing with renovations; practicing librarians acting as adjunct LIS instructors.

The initial implementation was generally found to be user-unfriendly, and although online communities did form, their use was less widespread than might have been expected or hoped. Online communities were automatically created for many committees and boards, with a default designation of "private." Designation as "public" required action on the part of the committee chair. Since committee-based online communities were created automatically, it isn't known to what extent discussion takes place there or on the ALA-maintained discussion lists. Relatively few true public affinity groups were created.

New software for online communities, called ALA Connect, is under development and is planned for implementation in early 2009. The new software is expected to be more intuitive and easier to use. It is also thought that in addition to being useful for informal online communities (such as the iguana-owning reference librarians), ALA Connect might be so attractive and easy to use that it could – in time – replace the ALA-Headquarters maintained electronic discussion lists being used by committees and boards. As with the previous system, committee-based online communities will be created automatically, with the default condition of "private."

TFOEMP could not assess the usefulness or usability of ALA Connect, but did discuss online communities in general.

TFOEMP believes that supporting online communities for self-defined affinity groups of members is an appropriate function for the Association, and providing an easy way to form such groups is a valuable member service. Although there are other places for members to form affinity groups, including through commercial services such as Yahoo! Groups and Google Groups, or through blogs created by individuals, ALA Connect could provide a central place to seek or create online communities that would be of interest to ALA members, with the added benefit that Headquarters staff would be responsible for maintenance of the site.

There are many issues that need to be considered, including, but not limited to: the likelihood that committees may prefer ALA Connect to Headquarters-maintained discussion lists; whether preference of one over the other will or should change with committee membership; the appropriate use of online communities with restricted membership; overlap with other means of electronic

interaction, including those that may be commercially available and those that may be privately maintained; whether there should be guidelines regarding the appropriateness of a particular affinity group topic to the ALA Website; etc.

In addition to ALA Connect, there are other ALA-hosted mechanisms for enabling electronic participation in ALA activities and interests, including ALA's presence on Second Life, and its hosting of blogs.

Blogs may be considered as a sort of online publishing, and as such, beyond the TFOEMP charge. Nevertheless, some mention of blogging seems appropriate since it is a facet of online participation and communication that may not otherwise be recognized. Most ALA-hosted blogs are run by ALA Offices or staff, or are related to the work of particular groups, but to the extent that they enable discussion and comment, the readership of any blog constitutes a kind of online community, and one might argue that just being able to read coverage of ALA activity is a kind of participation in the same way that passively observing a preconference or program constitutes a kind of participation.

Although many ALA members have not yet incorporated perusal of blogs into their own routines, to an increasing number of members, blogs are a normal means of communication. Having an "official blogger" might be one way for ALA committees to communicate with current and potential members, and a way for the essence of programs and pre-conferences to be made electronically available to members who were not able to attend. It should be noted that blogs need not even be ALA-hosted to provide participation in ALA activities. Many individual members relate their ALA experiences and provide their perspective on ALA activities on their own privately-hosted blogs.

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## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Each recommendation below is followed by discussion, including explicit consideration of BARC involvement and of issues affecting priority for implementation. TFOEMP considers all of its recommendations to be necessary and all to be high priority, and urges that all be passed at this time. Nevertheless, TFOEMP has attempted to assess or to provide information regarding possible order of implementation, as influenced by: Ease of implementation (including level of controversy); Necessity of being in place before another recommendation can be implemented; Numbers or groups of people affected; The message that might be sent if the recommendation were adopted.

For convenience of referral during Council debate, all recommendations, minus the "Discussion" section, are copied into a separate section at the end of the report, numbered as Appendix E.

### ❖ RECOMMENDATION 1: CD # 35.1

*Encourage all units of the Association to engage in active experimentation with providing electronic access to non-governance activities. Non-governance activities include such things as conferences, pre-conferences, programs, major addresses, awards ceremonies, and other sessions during which official Association business is not conducted. Experimentation should be with regard both to types of access provided, and to fiscal models for supporting such access. To assist in evaluation, information about participation, satisfaction, actual cost, overhead, etc. should be kept and analyzed, and shared with the Budget Analysis and Review Committee.*

#### **Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO. It is, however, mirrored for governance activities in Recommendation 8, CD #35.8.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. Because this recommendation calls for experiments, and already includes a provision to share information with BARC, it need not be routed through BARC before passage. BARC will need to have significant input into later decisions about implementation once experiments have been conducted, and perhaps, in some cases, in designing the experiments.

*Priority:* FIRST. It has a potentially high impact on a great many members, there is high member interest; divisions and roundtables are already engaged in some of these activities.

*Other:* There is no policy impediment to providing electronic access to non-governance activities. The primary considerations are fiscal and organizational. In order for good decisions to be made, the information gathered needs not only to be useful and accurate (within relevant restraints), but it should also be consistent across units, with consistent definitions, scopes, methods, etc.

#### ❖ **RECOMMENDATION 2: CD #35.2**

*Adopt a new interpretation of Policy 7.4.4 (Open Meetings) as follows:*

##### **Interpretation of the Policy on Open Meetings (7.4.4)**

The policy on Open Meetings, 7.4.4., reads as follows:

“All meetings of the American Library Association and its units are open to all members and to members of the press. Registration requirements apply. Closed meetings may be held only for the discussion of matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions.”

The primary purpose of the policy on Open Meetings is to facilitate transparency of Association governance. No member should ever feel that there are Association related decisions made where he or she was prevented from finding information, raising concerns or expressing opinion. Meetings of the Association’s committees and boards held at its Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference are in general open to all interested members and members of the press who choose to attend. It should be noted that attendance at meetings is only one of many ways of finding out about the work of the Association. The work and decisions of the Association and its Units are made available through a variety of means, including publications, Websites, etc.

The American Library Association is a national educational association with an organizational pattern of units and sub-units with distributed responsibility for the conduct and accomplishment of its business. As a membership association, its structure, procedures, and actions do not parallel public or governmental bodies.

In support of its goal of promoting and improving library service and librarianship, the ALA conducts activities such as: developing standards; accrediting library school programs; granting scholarships, awards, and other recognitions; developing and conducting continuing education programs; publishing monographs and periodicals; reviewing and recommending publication; publicizing library needs and services; recommending legislation; providing advisory assistance; conducting many other projects and programs related to the development or improvement of library services.

Many of these activities require discussion by a planning or evaluating group, and an assessment of individual or institutional achievement. Questions have been raised concerning the manner in which the Open Meeting Policy relates to ALA activities.

In implementing the above policy, the following general concepts should be kept in mind:

- Personnel assessment areas in Association activities should be structured so that no individual's right to privacy will be abridged or endangered.
- Discussions of confidential information regarding an institution should not abridge the institution's right to privacy.
- Information regarding individuals and institutions may be considered by the individual or institution to be confidential or highly sensitive (private) at one date, but public information at a later date; the Association may need to take timing into account in identifying specific matters of privacy.
- ALA members and other interested persons should be encouraged to attend meetings where business is conducted; closed meeting should be planned only when they are essential to protect privacy.

Matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions call for a meeting or a portion of a meeting to be closed to all except members of the body holding the meeting, and invited attendees. Matters calling for a closed session include (but are not limited to) such areas as:

- Deliberations concerning the performance of personal members, or institutions, or paid staff of the ALA and its units.
- Deliberations concerning professional achievements, contributions and qualification of members being considered for office.
- Deliberations concerning the qualifications of individuals or institutions being considered for grants, scholarships or similar recognition.
- Deliberations concerning the ability of an institution to meet published criteria or standards.
- Deliberations concerning contractual matters, and matters with legal or financial implications for individuals or institutions.
- Deliberations concerning awards to individuals for achievement and/or creative works.
- Deliberations concerning awards to institutions or organizations.

Much of the work of the Association is accomplished during meetings held as part of the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. These meetings are listed in the official conference program and are open to all conference attendees who are physically present, except under circumstances such as those identified above. Meetings, all of which are closed, are identified as such in the conference or meeting program. Many of the Association's committees and boards find it necessary and efficient also to schedule meetings outside of Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. These meetings may be held face to face, by telephone, or by electronic means. Costs and logistics may prevent ALA from enabling

universal access to these meetings. Individuals interested in attending any of these outside of conference meetings, either physically or virtually, should contact the appropriate chair to express interest in attending. If attendance can be accommodated, a fee may be charged to cover the cost of enabling it.

It is the responsibility of the chair of each committee, board, etc. to insure that the spirit of the open meeting policy is enforced, to identify in advance of a meeting any need to close a portion of it, and to make that fact known in advance. Notwithstanding the requirement to identify the need for closed discussion in advance, it is recognized that matters may arise in the course of a meeting that necessitate closing a portion of a meeting.

No matters other than those requiring protection of privacy may be discussed during a closed portion of a meeting. All actions taken in closed session must be reported to the membership of the parent unit and made public at the earliest possible time after the closed session.

Although a unit's workload may be such that some of its business must be conducted through meetings held outside of Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting, in accordance with Policy 7.4.2, notice of such meetings must be announced ten days prior to the meeting and the results of the meeting must be made public no fewer than 30 days after the meeting's conclusion.

Questions regarding adherence to the Open Meeting Policy should be addressed to the chief officer of the governing unit.

January 31, 1981; revised January xx, 2009

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* MINIMAL. It does not call for the Association to support online real-time accessibility of all meetings.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* FIRST. The question has already arisen, and it is clear that there is confusion. Lack of a workable interpretation could lead to different interpretations, including some that are either prohibitively expensive, or logistically nightmarish to implement.

*Other:* The Open Meetings policy was instituted ca. 1970, primarily in response to requests from the library press to attend Executive Board meetings. Neither the policy, nor the existing interpretation of the policy (from 1978, see Appendix B) defines "open" or "closed." There is no real statement of what was to be achieved by open meetings. Historical documentation is also silent on these matters.

The Open Meetings policy was formulated at a time when meetings were carried out face-to-face only, and it was generally (though never officially) interpreted to mean "If you can get there, and if you pay the registration, you can observe"-- and that therefore, this met the standard of openness. There have always, however, been limitations to the reach of the Open Meetings Policy, deriving from physical, logistical, and financial factors.

The policy has never been applied to correspondence (telephonic, written, or electronic) that may take place between official meetings at Midwinter and Annual conferences--activities that are also a part of the regular work of the Association.

Electronic capabilities have expanded possibilities for official meetings to be held outside of the twice-yearly conferences, and for meetings at the twice-yearly conferences to be conducted at least in part electronically. It is at least theoretically possible for all meetings, whether at conferences or between them, to be electronically accessible to all members of the body holding the meeting, as well as to observers. Some meetings may lend themselves easily to electronic participation, and some ALA committees and other entities have been conducting business electronically for some time. There are significant logistical and financial issues, however, that may make providing this kind of blanket accessibility for all meetings difficult, awkward, or financially unfeasible.

TFOEMP began with the assumption that open electronic meetings were both desirable and achievable. It became evident, however, that blanket implementation of fully open electronic meetings is not presently achievable, and that requiring blanket on-line, real-time access to all meetings of all governance entities (which would mean that no meetings could be held unless they were face-to-face meetings at the twice-yearly conferences, or unless on-line, real-time access could be made accessible to all), could actually deter increased electronic participation.

Given the impracticability of mandating fully open electronic meetings, TFOEMP considered how the Association might otherwise achieve the purposes and principles embodied in the Open Meetings Policy. After discussion, TFOEMP determined that the primary purpose of the Open Meetings Policy was to provide “transparency of Association governance” and to assure that “No member should ever feel that there are Association related decisions made where he or she was prevented from finding information, raising concerns or expressing opinion.” To this end, TFOEMP concluded that the existing policy can remain as currently written, but the existing Interpretation of the policy needs to be updated as proposed.

### ❖ **RECOMMENDATION 3: CD #35.3**

*Adopt the following policy addressing the openness of between-meeting activities of committees and boards.*

#### Policy on Open Activities, # TBD

All activities of the committees, boards, etc. of the American Library Association and its units should be conducted as openly as is feasible. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the American Library Association that all governance related activities, sponsored by the ALA or one of its units, taking place outside of official meetings should be accessible to the membership of the sponsoring body.

As with ALA’s Open Meetings Policy, #7.4.4, the primary purpose of the policy on Open Activities is to facilitate transparency of the Association’s governance. The policy is intended to cover all activities of committees, boards, etc. of the Association and its units that take place between the meetings held at the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference and other official meetings scheduled between conferences. Activities such as communications, mailings, emails, discussion lists, blogs, etc. which do not meet the definition of a meeting , ALA Policy, #7.4.1, are examples of activities covered by this policy.

Exceptions to this Open Activity Policy are permissible for committees, boards, etc. whose discussions frequently touch on matters of privacy regarding individuals, institutions, and/or

organizations, or where, in the opinion of the body, its work would be hindered by open member accessibility to discussions.

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES, but if the provisions are as TFOEMP recommends, fiscal implications should be relatively small.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* FIRST. The question has already arisen, and if a policy is not articulated and put in place, there will be confusion, inconsistency, and disgruntlement.

*Other:* This policy is expressed generally, in terms of all activities undertaken by governance entities within ALA. Although the need for such a policy originated from requests to open committee discussion lists, TFOEMP believes that restricting a policy to that single application would be a mistake, and has chosen to make a more general statement about openness of governance activities, from which practices for particular implementations (such as discussion lists) can be derived. Further, in keeping the predominant pattern of the Policy Manual, the policy proposed does not include implementation details, instructions, or specific processes, as such details are more properly contained in interpretations, processes, and instructions.

Many governance entities within ALA, such as committees and boards, communicate between conferences by means of an ALA-maintained discussion list. (A committee or board Online Community could serve the same purpose, but for simplicity's sake, this report will be phrased in terms of the ALA-maintained discussion lists). Prior to the availability of such lists, committees communicated between meetings through regular mail, by individual telephone calls, or later, through e-mail, using privately maintained distribution lists.

Communication through e-mail is faster and generally easier than using regular mail. It is more convenient than telephone communication, and yields a record of what has transpired. But like regular mail and individual phone calls, e-mail discussion lists provide asynchronous communication. Because of this, activity conducted via lists cannot be considered meetings. Accordingly, communication via committee lists is not covered by the ALA Open Meetings Policy (Policy 7.4.4).

It has been proposed that the electronic discussion lists of committees, boards, etc. be made open to any member of the unit that hosts the list. Initial discussion interpreted "open" to mean that any member of the host unit could be added to the membership of the committee/board discussion list upon request. Whether that meant providing read/post access or read-only access was not determined, but both possibilities were considered.

Implementation of either read-only or read/post access to discussion lists is technologically feasible, and seems to be relatively inexpensive in terms of administrative overhead. Other means of providing timely access to discussions held on ALA-hosted discussion lists also exist. For example, TFOEMP's discussions are accessible through a link on the task force Website. Thus, a policy to provide access to discussions held on ALA-hosted discussion lists could be implemented, at least from an operational standpoint. Other aspects of the proposal, however, merit further consideration.

Reservations have been expressed about the proposal. There is concern about the discussion of matters that would "touch on the privacy of individuals" or that might otherwise be damaging to the

work of the unit (award juries, for example, deal in matters that should not be made public; planning committees discussing the relative merits of potential speakers could not hold those conversations in public; boards may engage in negotiation of contracts and public discussion of intent could limit the ability to negotiate). Some noted the difficulties of managing an analog to a "closed session," in that lists often carry several threads simultaneously, only one of which may be confidential. Conversation wanders more freely on a discussion list than it does in a formal meeting, and discussion may veer into confidential territory without warning. Even if confidential discussion can be controlled, the prospect of temporarily shutting down the list, or of using two lists – one public and one not - and remembering which one to use, was seen as difficult to manage and ultimately unreliable.

Because the groups that expressed the greatest reservations about a requirement to open discussion lists were elected governing boards, TFOEMP solicited comment from elected boards in the Association. The boards responding expressed strong support for openness wherever feasible, and wherever it served or did not hinder the work of the group concerned. At the same time they expressed strong reservations about a mandate to open the discussion lists of all committees and boards. Some excerpts from responses received from boards were included in the message on this topic that was sent to Council on 8/20/2008, and are attached as Appendix C.

TFOEMP concludes that open access to discussions held on ALA-hosted governance discussion lists is desirable, and should be the default condition, so long as topics being discussed are not of a confidential nature, and so long as opening those discussions would not hinder the work of the group. The bodies themselves are in the best position to determine whether these conditions pertain. Too stringent a policy would result in committees and boards utilizing private e-mail distribution lists for their work, thereby actually reducing openness of committee/board communications. Given the wide-ranging responsibilities of elected boards and executive committees, open access to the electronic discussions of these bodies' elected boards is especially problematic.

A policy covering access to discussions held on ALA-hosted discussion lists is needed. It should be guided by the principles of openness/transparency, as embodied in 7.4.4, but should take into account the different nature of face-to-face communication in formal meetings and electronic conversation. It should be phrased in terms of outcome (e.g. openness of between-meeting activities of governance entities) rather than mechanisms.

#### ❖ **RECOMMENDATION 4: CD #35.4**

*Eliminate Policy 6.16 (Virtual Members). In its place, enable appointment of full committee members who may attend meetings virtually only. Make no new committee appointments or reappointments to ALA-level committees under Policy 6.16 after January, 2009, and COO should not authorize addition of ALA-level committee members under Policy 6.16 after January, 2009. (Implementation of this recommendation requires revisions to Policy 4.5 (contained in Recommendation 5, CD #35.5)). In preparation for implementation of this recommendation, charge the new task force described in CDE #35.16 to make recommendations concerning issues such as appointment procedures, limitation to proportion of "e-participating" members on a committee; establishment of quorum, and any other measures specifically dealt with by Policy 6.16. The new task force should also address issues such as the extent of the Association's responsibility to provide electronic access for committee members to meetings of their committee, and the responsibility of those participating electronically to support their own access to meetings. Additionally, the new task force should consider whether a separate policy, specifically authorizing the appointment of committee members whose attendance will be electronic only needs to be written, or if revision of 4.5 is sufficient. If a separate policy or additional change to existing policy is needed, the new task force should write it.*



## **Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* YES. Revisions to 4.5 (Recommendation 5, CD #35.5) need to be done at the same time. The work would be assigned to the new task force Task Force recommended in recommendation 16, CD #35.16.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES, since fewer people would be required to come to conferences, and because it could bring expectations for Association support for virtual participation.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. It needs to be referred simultaneously with passage.

*Priority:* FIRST: Although the number of people directly affected at present is small, virtual membership as it currently exists is perceived as deeply flawed and as disenfranchising members. Enabling electronic-only participation in ALA governance is eagerly sought by many ALA members.

*Other:* In 2002, in an effort to provide an avenue for meaningful participation in Association governance activities by ALA members for whom physical conference attendance is difficult, Council established a category of committee membership called "Virtual Members" (Policy 6.16). At the time the policy was created, there was little expectation that electronic participation in the meetings held at the twice-yearly conferences would be possible or available, and this influenced how the policy was written.

Major provisions of the existing policy are these: A virtual committee member can participate in all committee activities except voting. No more than one-third of a committee may consist of virtual members. The quorum is established based on the total number of non-virtual members. Because of how the quorum is determined, even if a virtual committee member manages to attend a face-to-face meeting, that member still has no vote.

This category of committee membership has from its inception received much criticism. Very few virtual members have been appointed to standing committees of the Association. (Of all ALA level committees, only the Membership Committee has virtual members). Comments on the recent member survey suggest that the category of "virtual member" is little known, less understood, and even less appreciated.

TFOEMP believes that the creation of "Virtual Members" was an honest attempt to enable greater participation in the Association, but that it was established too quickly. That is, it was established during a relatively short transitional stage when few people could envision a near-term possibility for achieving real-time electronic participation in governance activities. Since then, technological possibilities as well as the attitudes and abilities of ALA members have advanced so rapidly that the category of non-voting Virtual Member appears to have become outdated before it ever became widely adopted.

The TF believes that the category of "Virtual Member" as it is currently defined, no longer suits the Association's purposes, but there are enough complicating factors that TFOEMP cannot recommend the elimination of 6.16 without also recommending that related issues, such as those noted below, should be addressed prior to implementation.

Some of the questions that need to be addressed were included in the message that TFOEMP sent to Council on August 18, 2008. They address issues of the size of committees; the proportion of members who may not be attending meetings physically; whether there is a need to know in advance how an appointee will attend meetings, and is whether the status can change; determination of quorum; responsibilities of the Association and of its members for providing e-access to meetings;

what happens if things go wrong; whether provisions in the Bylaws concerning voting would apply to committee meetings conducted in part electronically.

TFOEMP requested COO's comments about this recommendation, and COO's response appears as Appendix D. The new task force should take COO's comments into account during its work.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 5: CD #35.5**

5. *Revise Policy 4.5 (Requirements for Committee Service) as follows:*

**4.5 Requirements for Committee Service**

**4.5.1 Membership.** Except as specifically authorized, members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies must be members in good standing of the group's parent organization.

**4.5.2 Participation.** Members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies are expected to participate in the work of the group. Participation includes both attendance at synchronous meetings scheduled in conjunction with the Midwinter Meeting or Annual Conference or at other times during the year, as well as contributions through asynchronous communication methods that may be utilized by the group outside of formal meetings. Attendance at meetings may be in person, or through other means that enable synchronous communication.

**4.5.3 Provision of explanation of absences.** Members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies are expected to provide explanation of their absences and/or inability to participate to the committee chair or unit secretary. Failure to provide adequate explanation of absences from two consecutive synchronous meetings or to participate otherwise in the work of the committee constitutes grounds for removal, upon request of the chair and approval of the appropriate appointing official or governing board.

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO, though it is closely related to Recommendation 4, CD #35.4.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* MINIMAL. The implications of the policy change could be large (as noted in the discussion of Virtual Members, CD #35.4), but the proposed wording is sufficiently flexible that, by itself the policy changes would not have much fiscal impact.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* FIRST.

*Other:* Revision of 4.5 is necessary to provide explicit authorization for members of committees, boards, etc. to attend meetings either electronically, or face to face. Policy 4.5 was written at a time when essentially all committee business was conducted at face to face meetings at the twice-yearly conferences. Accordingly, it expressed the need for participation in committee work in terms of attendance only. As committees, boards, etc. do an increasing amount of their work and discussion electronically and asynchronously, contribution to the work of the committee must be defined as more than mere attendance.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 6: CD #35.6**

*Request that the Executive Director evaluate the ease, expense, and serviceability of various options to enable electronic participation in meetings that are at least partly face-to-face, and to provide guidance and instructions for committee chairs and members so that e-participation is made possible. Guidance and instructions should be reviewed and if necessary updated at least annually, to keep current with newly-available or changed options.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* MINIMAL. The process of evaluating would have relatively small impact.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. BARC would have to be involved in parts of the initial evaluation, and would have to make recommendations about the fiscal feasibility of any proposals that might arise based on the results of the evaluation.

*Priority:* FIRST. The information that results will be crucial to committees, boards, divisions, roundtables, etc. trying to make intelligent decisions about what they can and cannot support.

*Other:* Not all those who will be placed in a position to arrange for or use electronic access to meetings are well informed about possible options, or how to implement them. Individual members may be comfortable with one mode of access, or one software package and not another. In order to reduce the burden on member volunteers, and to increase the likelihood of success in providing access, clear and up-to-date instructions are necessary.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 7: CD #35.7**

*Implement on an experimental basis some means of providing electronic access to Council activities in a timely manner. Such implementation constitutes a follow up on CD #59, "A Resolution on Expanding Council Transparency", passed at the Annual Conference, 2008. Implementation should take place no later than Annual Conference, 2009. Care should be taken that the means chosen provides access to all members, or that alternative means can be provided if necessary (e.g. if an audio podcast is provided, some means of access for the hearing impaired should also be investigated). BARC should be consulted in evaluating feasibility of possible mechanisms, and should be involved in the evaluation of the success of the experimental implementation. The success of the means chosen should be tracked and evaluated not only in terms of cost, but also considering ease of use by members, interest among the membership, and intangibles such as perception of openness, effectiveness, etc.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO, but it is related to recommendation 8, CD #35.8, regarding experimentation with providing access to governance activities.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. The recommendation includes explicit instructions to involve BARC.

*Priority:* FIRST. Even though, considering the number of people who currently attend Council meetings (Councilors, others on the agenda, relevant staff, plus a small number of observers), this item might seem to be less than first priority, it constitutes an experiment that needs to be carried out before CD # 35.8 is implemented.

*Other:* In an association that has openness as a guiding principle, making the activities of its policy governing body visible to the membership is a logical first place to start in making the governance activities open and accessible. What is learned through implementation of this recommendation can be applied to providing access to other governance activities.

#### ❖ RECOMMENDATION 8: CD #35.8

*Once the Open Meetings Policy has been newly interpreted (see recommendation 2, CD #35.2), and CD#59 (see recommendation 7, CD #35.7) has been implemented, encourage all units of the Association to engage in active experimentation with providing electronic access to other governance activities where such access would not violate existing policy. Governance activities would include such meetings as business meetings of divisions and roundtables, meetings of committees, task forces, forums and assemblies where business may be conducted, etc. Experimentation should be with regard both to types of access provided, and to fiscal models for supporting such access. To assist in evaluation, information about participation, satisfaction, actual cost, overhead, etc. should be kept and analyzed, and shared with the Budget Analysis and Review Committee.*

#### **Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* YES. CD #35.2, CD #35.7.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. The recommendation includes explicit instructions to involve BARC. Since implementation of this recommendation would wait until implementation of CD #35.2 and CD #35.7, BARC would have the time it needs to comment substantively and return with possible caveats, etc. prior to implementation of this recommendation.

*Priority:* SECOND. It depends on two other things being done first, and it would affect fewer members than measures aimed at the general membership.

*Other:* In order for good decisions to be made, the information gathered needs not only to be useful and accurate (within relevant restraints), but it should also be consistent across units, with consistent definitions, scopes, methods, etc.

#### ❖ RECOMMENDATION 9: CD #35.9

*Request that the ALA Executive Director investigate possible means by which Council Members who are unable to attend Council meetings in person might participate in live discussions and vote electronically. Cost implications of such innovations should be identified. The Executive Director should work with BARC as he identifies and considers cost implications. A report on findings should be delivered to Council by the Annual Conference, 2009.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO. The investigation can be carried on regardless of passage of other measures.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES. Possibly substantial.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. The recommendation includes explicit instructions to involve BARC.

*Priority:* SECOND. It has an initial impact on relatively few members.

*Other:* Council seems to be a particularly good body to experiment with. Not only is it the policy-setting body for the Association, but it is also relatively small, and its meetings are held in a single, predictable space, and a space that is likely to be equipped/wired sufficiently to make such participation at least theoretically feasible. Moreover, because Council is the policy governing body, enabling active participation by all members, even by those who may be prevented from attending a particular set of meetings because of illness, family emergencies, temporary fiscal restraints, etc. seems especially important. Additionally, it is known that the expense of attending conferences long enough to attend all Council sessions is a deterrent to those who might wish to run for election. The knowledge that a means of participation existed in case of emergencies might make a difference in people's decision whether or not to run.

**RECOMMENDATION 10: CD #35.10**

*Charge the new task force described in CDE #35.16 to develop an Association position and policy statement regarding Online Communities. This new task force should consider such matters as: the importance of providing Online Communities to members; overlap with other mechanisms for forming different kinds of online affinity groups; appropriateness of Association hosting; and relationship to ALA-hosted discussion lists for committees. The policy statement should cover such matters as: the purpose of communities of interest; the appropriateness of Association support for such communities; the rights and obligations of members participating, etc.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* SOME. That is, something that BARC may wish to consider is whether, in tight times, this is something that ALA should be supporting, when there are possibly non-ALA options, or whether there are tradeoffs that make the fiscal impact minimal.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. But a member of BARC is recommended to be on the new task force .

*Priority:* THIRD.

*Other:* See discussion of Online Communities in body of this report (Section 7).

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 11: CD #35.11**

*Request that the ALA Executive Director investigate the feasibility of enabling votes of Council between Midwinter and Annual meetings. Investigation should cover possible means of carrying out*

*such voting, as well as whether a provision similar to ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 8, which authorizes electronic voting by committees should be written as a new section in ALA Bylaws, Article IV. Also to be considered are the parliamentary implications of such voting, what constitutes "being canvassed simultaneously," the fiscal implications of "mid-term" voting, and the impact that such an ability might have on the activities and role of the Executive Board vis-a-vis Council. BARC should be involved in any consideration of the fiscal implications of this capability.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO, but it is related to CD #35.9 (enabling remote participation and voting in Council during regular meetings) and CD #35.12 (bylaws provisions regarding voting)

*Does this have fiscal implications?* YES.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. The recommendation includes explicit instructions to involve BARC in the investigation.

*Priority:* THIRD: The recommendation has a direct impact on relatively few members. Implementation would likely be expensive. Related issues are complex, requiring attention to policies, parliamentary implications, and possible bylaws changes.

*Other:* The business of the Association carries on throughout the year. Although the Executive Board acts on behalf of Council in between the twice-yearly conferences, restriction of Council action to twice a year imposes a limitation on the speed with which the Association can take action on matters arising from committees, or with which it might take certain actions to express opinion on emerging matters.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 12: CD #35.12**

*Revise and clarify ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 8, concerning mail or e-mail ballots. The current text, which was originally written for the Executive Board, and then extended to committees, should be revised to cover all boards and committees at all levels of the Association. Clarify what "canvassed simultaneously" means (for example, if a question is put to a committee on its discussion list, is that "canvassing simultaneously?") Clarify the second sentence by adding: "for passage of any measure voted on by these means." This issue has been referred to Constitution and Bylaws, and the TF would be pleased to defer this recommendation and to consider it in conjunction with the Constitution and Bylaws report.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO, but other recommendations may be dependent on clarity in this Bylaw.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* NO.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* FIRST, because of ease, and because of its relationship to other recommendations regarding participation and voting without physical presence.

*Other:* As currently worded, this Bylaw may be interpreted to apply only to ALA level committees, and not to Division or Roundtable boards and committees. The second sentence is not clear and has been interpreted differently by different people. The provision for electronic voting, providing all members are canvassed simultaneously appears to allow asynchronous voting, and thus may blur the distinction between a “meeting” and “between meeting activity,” leading to the assumption that votes may be taken outside of official meetings.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 13: CD #35.13**

*Revise ALA Bylaws, Article X, concerning notices and voting by mail to make it clear that this article refers only to votes of the entire membership. This issue has been referred to Constitution and Bylaws, and the TF would be pleased to defer this recommendation and to consider it in conjunction with the Constitution and Bylaws report.*

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* NO.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* FIRST, because of ease, and because of its relationship to other recommendations regarding participation and voting without physical presence, as for CD #35.12.

*Other:* This Bylaw is intended to apply only to votes of the entire ALA membership, but as currently written could be interpreted to apply to votes of any governance body. Such an interpretation could appear to contradict other provisions for conducting votes electronically.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 14**

*Request the Executive Director to devise and implement a plan whereby member volunteers can be effectively informed of ALA policies regarding the conduct of ALA business, including the Open Meetings Policy; the definition of a meeting; how votes may be taken; the organizational bias toward openness of Association business, including that conducted between official meetings.*

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* NO.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* MINIMAL.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* THIRD. Although this is extremely important, given that several TFOEMP recommendations are directed to the Executive Director, not all can be done first.

*Other:* Many committees and boards, especially in Divisions and Roundtables, are already using electronic means (primarily e-mail discussion lists) to accomplish the work of the body. Many of these entities are conducting work in ways that are unintentionally in violation of ALA policies. For example, some committees – both those whose work is confidential, and those whose work is not -- conduct all work asynchronously (that is, they hold no meetings as they are defined by ALA); in some committees, matters are brought to vote via e-mail; some electronic synchronous meetings are not registered in advance, nor summarized afterward. These entities conduct their business in this

manner because it works. It seems likely that committees will continue to use “what works” for their business regardless of (or ignorant of) policy. Therefore, as the Association moves forward, it must make compliance with policy as simple as possible, and design systems and processes so that “what works” enables conformance with policy, rather than driving member volunteers to operate outside of policy.

The Association must communicate clearly and repeatedly to member volunteers regarding Association policies, the reasons for them, and how they can be honored. All committee chairs, officers, board members, and members of committees, task forces, etc. at all levels of the Association must be informed every year, both in writing (print or electronic), and through orientation sessions where possible of overriding Association policies about participation. (One might imagine the functional equivalent of the standard announcement regarding turning off cell phones at the beginning of every year). Special attention should be given to Divisional and Roundtable Boards, asking for their assistance in assuring that the values of the Association regarding openness and participation are honored throughout the Association. Because most member volunteers rarely consult the policy manual, aggressive communication is essential.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 15: CD #35.15**

Charge the new task force described in Recommendation, CD #35.16 to (1) survey the Association membership and leadership regarding interest in electronic participation in Association programming and governance, and (2) to develop a framework for prioritization of efforts aimed at increasing electronic participation in Association governance and programming, and to report to Council, no later than the Annual Meeting, 2010.

**Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* YES, Recommendation 16, CD #35.16

*Does this have fiscal implications?* SOME, primarily the cost of conducting a survey.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO. BARC will have representation on the new task force, and can provide advice and comment as the survey is planned. ALA already has a license for survey software.

*Priority:* FIRST.

*Other:* There are both fiscal and organizational limitations to how much can be accomplished at one time. As the Association decides where first to put its efforts and where first to direct its resources, some common understanding of how priorities should be set is essential. For example, should the Association do the easy things first, in order to show fast progress? Should it do those things that benefit the greatest number of members, even if they are not the ones who carry the greatest financial burden? Should it implement the practices and support the things that benefit some people before those that benefit others? If so, which (e.g., those who spend the most money and time in support of the Association?) Can we assess the impact on overall membership satisfaction of any of the actions we might pursue?

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 16: CD #35.16**

*Appoint a new task force to address those matters identified in 35.4, 35.10 and 35.15. In order to accomplish these matters in a timely fashion, the new task force should be large enough to enable formation of subgroups addressing the discrete tasks. In order to assure continuity and to build*



upon the progress of the current TFOEMP, the new Task Force should include at least a near-majority of members of TFOEMP, plus representatives from the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC), and the Committee on Organization (COO), as well as at least one individual who has recently served as an appointing authority for ALA or one of its divisions or roundtables. The charge should be to (1) Develop an implementation plan for elimination of Virtual Members as described in CD 35.4 (2) Develop an Association position and policy statement regarding Online Communities; (3) Develop a framework for prioritization of efforts aimed at increasing electronic participation in Association governance and programming; (4) Bring to Council any other related issues. (5) Complete other work left unfinished by TFOEMP. The new task force should bring these documents to Council no later than the Midwinter, 2010 meetings.

#### **Discussion:**

*Is this dependent on other recommendations being passed?* YES.

*Does this have fiscal implications?* BY ITSELF, MINIMAL. It carries whatever implications there are from the related recommendations.

*Does this need to be referred first to BARC?* NO.

*Priority:* FIRST.

Other: In the timeframe available it proved impossible for TFOEMP to complete all aspects of its charge. Additionally, given that passage of some of its recommendations was not assured, TFOEMP was reluctant to give high priority to development of implementation plans for those recommendations. A single new task force, constituted as suggested, would bring continuity to the process, would bring needed expertise and perspective to the remaining tasks, and would provide a means of dividing the work into manageable segments while still maintaining central coordination and a larger body for ongoing discussion.

## **9. Moving Forward From Here**

It is important, as the Association moves forward, for it to be acknowledged that the demand for expanded means of electronic participation will continue to grow, and that a shift toward expanded electronic participation is inevitable. The current fiscal situation in the nation underscores the importance of continuing to explore means by which members can afford to participate in Association activities. Effective implementation of policies and means to increase electronic participation can help to attract or retain members. It can help the Association and its members to make better use of available resources. There is no holding back this tide. We must swim or be swept out by the undertow. The challenges before us include learning how to swim, deciding which stroke is appropriate to which purpose, and knowing where the shore is.

### **9.1 Continuum of Comfort**

There will always be a continuum of comfort with technology in the Association. There will always be a continuum of preference in what kinds of communication/participation are useful or desired. These differences are often generational, but they also arise from physical capabilities, preference for personal vs. impersonal interaction, cognitive style, etc. Increasingly, however, ALA members are becoming comfortable with modes of electronic communication, and increasingly, members are impatient at what they perceive to be outmoded methods of operation. Younger members have difficulty understanding why other members can't just "get with it." Recognizing that tension will always exist between those who are most *au courant* and those who treasure the tried-and-true, ALA

will have to engage in a perpetual process of balancing the needs and desires of one segment of the membership against another.

ALA as an organization is committed to democratic processes, and to inclusivity and egalitarianism. These values may contribute to the speed and manner in which the Association has embraced or will embrace various means of electronic participation. So long as there is one member who cannot, or who prefers not to participate in some process or other electronically, the Association is loath to insist upon it, or to declare it a norm. As a consequence, support for such participation may not be accorded priority in budgeting or planning, and development may lag behind the desires of the majority of the active membership.

It may be desirable to develop a policy statement regarding the general direction of the Association toward enabling greater participation through electronic means and toward realizing efficiencies and fiscal benefits through electronic means while still valuing the principle of openness, still valuing personal interaction, and making continual reasonable accommodations for the preferences and abilities of all of its members.

## **9.2 Meetings and Open Meetings**

TFOEMP is not recommending a change in the definition of a meeting, nor is it recommending abandonment of the Open Meetings Policy (though it is recommending a new interpretation of that policy). Nevertheless, these two positions pose special difficulties for expansion of electronic participation in the area of governance. It is often much easier to conduct Association business asynchronously, and extemporaneously (thus making advance notice of matters to be discussed difficult). As a consequence, work will almost inevitably be carried out in this manner, despite policy. It may be necessary, therefore, for the Association to undertake a serious discussion of such questions as: Should the definition of a meeting be altered to encompass asynchronous discussion? If meetings continue to be defined as synchronous, should policy be adjusted to allow some types of formal decisions to be made asynchronously? Given the essential impossibility of enabling a “pure” implementation of the Open Meetings Policy when meetings are held electronically, and much business is conducted asynchronously, should the Open Meetings Policy be narrowed so that it refers only to physical meetings? Should the Open Meetings Policy be entirely replaced by a new policy framed in terms of openness/transparency of Association business rather than in terms of the privilege of attendance? The TF felt that such major recommendations were not so much beyond its charge, but that they would require so much time to study and discuss, and would engender so much dissension, that it would be impossible to get such recommendations passed in the existing timeframe.

## **9.3 Midwinter Meetings**

Throughout its work, and especially in consideration of responses to the Member Survey, the subject of the purpose of, continued need for, the benefits and drawbacks of, and possible alternatives to continuing to hold a major Midwinter Meeting obtruded itself.

If opportunities for electronic participation in both governance and non-governance activities are expanded and widely adopted, some activities may be found to be better suited to being offered electronically. Some governance bodies, especially those whose agendas are limited, and whose work may not be time-sensitive, may find that holding formal meetings twice a year no longer seems necessary. Some members may find that being able to participate in continuing education opportunities, or to observe programs satisfies most of their needs, and that the cost of participating electronically compares so favorably with the cost of physical presence that they can no longer justify travelling to the Midwinter meeting. Increased emphasis on the environmental impact of extensive travel, and today’s economic situation are also influencing how members view Midwinter.

Although Midwinter has grown to be a very large meeting attended by many members who are not involved in Association governance, its origins were as a strictly business meeting, attended only by member volunteers who were actively involved in governance activities: committees, boards, Council, etc. Its evolution into a “little Annual” has been incorporated into Association infrastructure, planning, budget, and culture. Accordingly, eliminating Midwinter, or reverting to a strictly business meeting only for those governance entities that must have two formal meetings a year to fulfill their function is not something that could be done without serious examination and extensive planning, and addressing a wide array of issues, including some less obvious issues such as the impact on vendors, and changes in workload and in the type of work to be performed by ALA staff.

TFOEMP believes that expansion of electronic participation and the current economic environment both add urgency to the need to undertake such examination and planning. The Task Force debated whether to include a recommendation to that effect in its report, but concluded that such a recommendation exceeded the Task Force charge, and also that discussion of “whither Midwinter” could be so charged and so extensive that it might prevent careful consideration of the recommendations that are directly related to the TFOEMP charge. Nevertheless, the Task Force urges the Association to undertake such an in depth study and consideration, and to begin it without delay.

Submitted January 24, 2009

Janet Swan Hill, Chair

And members: Vibiana Bowman, Courtney L. Young, Dawn Vaughn, Gina Persichini, James Casey, Judy Nelson, Joe Sanchez, Keri Cascio, Karen Schneider, Charles Kratz, Michael J. Miller, Peter Hepburn, Stephanie Sarnoff, Sue MacTavish

# APPENDIX A

From: ALA TFOEMP Survey Team  
Subject: 2008 Survey Assessment  
To: Janet Swan Hill, Chair, ALA Task Force on Electronic Meeting Participation  
Date: December 11, 2008

Note: in the following discussion, the report analysts took a cue from survey respondents and used the word “committee” to refer generically to committees, task forces, interest groups, and governing units such as boards and councils. Also note that the text of this cover memo appears in the body of the report on page 6. It is repeated here so that this appendix can stand on its own. Because it is intended that this analysis be read online, it is formatted somewhat differently from the main body of the TFOEMP report

In June, 2008, the Task Force on Electronic Meeting Participation, (TFOEMP) working with staff of the American Library Association, conducted a 16-question survey of ALA members to gauge practices and attitudes about electronic participation in the work of the Association. The survey, broadcast through mailing lists, blogs, *American Libraries Direct*, and other means, received nearly 1,300 responses—a very strong response, indicating it touched a chord with ALA members. Furthermore, even questions toward the end of the survey received hundreds of responses, indicating that members were engaged in the topic. Finally, the survey received 369 responses – some quite passionate – in the final comment section.

The survey provided a revealing look at our Association in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Members appreciate face-to-face (“f2f”) opportunities such as Annual Conference and Midwinter Meetings, but they report conducting much Association work electronically (back to 1990, as one respondent tartly noted). Over 70% said that in the last five years they had not participated in any unit that had conducted its work exclusively face-to-face. Despite ALA policy and practice deterring fully-virtual participation, one in five respondents reported participating in ALA committees that conducted all work online.

Yet the increase in e-participation, whether hybrid or fully virtual, has not resulted in a corresponding drop in “f2f” activity, at least based on attendance data for annual conferences in the last ten years:

1999 New Orleans	22,598
2000 Chicago	24,913
2001 San Francisco	26,820
2002 Atlanta	21,130
2003 Toronto	17,570
2004 Orlando	19,546
2005 Chicago	27,962
2006 New Orleans	16,964
2007 Washington, D.C.	28,499 (all-time attendance record)
2008 Anaheim	22,047

The only correlations immediately suggested by this data is that conference attendance rises for popular tourism locations in urban areas not recently devastated by epidemics or natural disasters. Perhaps ALA members would rather ALA help them get most of the committee busy-work out of the way between annual conferences so they can allocate their limited travel funds to “going to Annual” knowing they can spend most of their three or four days attending interesting and informative programs, networking with peers, and visiting exhibits.

Attitudes toward Midwinter Meeting are far cooler. Enough respondents questioned the role of the Midwinter Meetings that any future assessment of virtual participation must meet that particular issue head-on. One of the more blunt responses summarized the input of other, more politic members in stating, “Having two live meetings a year is ridiculous.”

Many respondents referenced the financial toll of face-to-face participation, the environmental impact of holding two Association-wide face-to-face meetings every year, and the impracticality of using the handful of hours available at conferences to perform most or all Association work. The survey was conducted before the economic meltdown of fall 2008, and it is likely that concern about cost issues for ALA participation has increased since then.

While we include representative comments from the fewer than ten respondents who argued for requiring face-to-face participation, overwhelmingly, members used the comments section to underscore their support of e-participation and their desire for fewer obstacles and more support for electronic engagement within the Association.

Many respondents appear unaware of (or perhaps unconcerned by) ALA policy limiting electronic participation and proscribing online voting within committees, and quite a few shrugged off the requirement to hold votes in person (ALA Policy 6.1) by noting that most ALA work is consensus-based rather than vote-driven. Several respondents noted that online work is more incremental, evolving, and collaborative, precluding the need to vote. E-participation has its challenges and its training curves; both chairs and members of committees with e-participants expressed some dissatisfaction with the experience. Nevertheless, this survey suggests members believe the gains greatly outweigh the losses.

The simpler technologies were by far the most popular, with email and phone at the top, though hundreds of members said they would use technologies such as Voice over IP (VOIP, or Internet telephony) if ALA provided support for these tools. This question alone raised interesting issues about ALA’s role in educating its members about tools for e-participation, as there are free tools for VOIP, such as Skype, that would require no intervention on ALA’s part, and there are other tools, such as web conferencing, that ALA makes available to members and that include VOIP. The question of whether ALA should provide tools or enable their usage and educate members came up in the comments, and should get close discussion.

In the earliest days of networked technologies, ALA members reasonably argued that “face-to-face” was fairer and more democratic because e-tools and the corresponding bandwidth to support them were largely only accessible to an elite few. It is obvious from the responses to the surveys and the many comments that attitudes have reversed for many ALA members. It is requiring members to allocate scarce travel funds to attend multiple on-site meetings per year that many now see as unfair—or as some respondents put it, “classist,” “elitist,” “irresponsible,” and less than “moral.” Virtual participation is increasingly seen as a democratizing tool that places engagement with our national professional association within reach of a much wider, more economically and demographically diverse swath of our membership—while also reducing ALA’s carbon footprint.

Finally, it is evident the vast majority of ALA members have accepted electronic engagement as a given of modern business practice (for newer members, e-participation is simply a welcome fact of life). Very few respondents expressed concern that some ALA members might not want to use e-participation tools (though several comments did express concern that technologies be accessible to the differently-abled and to low-bandwidth users).

We on this survey report recommend that this document be read online, not only to be environmentally and cost conscious, but to enable broader participation and commentary.

Respectfully (and collaboratively) submitted,

James Casey  
Keri Cascio  
Charles Kratz  
Michael J. Miller  
Karen G. Schneider

(Question 1 was demographic, and asked for the ALA member number. This was designed to allow future analysis of the survey, and to control for duplicate entries.)

**Question 2. Which of these tools have you used in the last five years for work on ALA committees, task forces, interest groups and other units?**

Answer Options	Currently Use	Do Not Use	Would Use if Supported by ALA	Don't Know	Response Count
Email	1056	59	37	10	1162
Telephone	737	286	66	15	1104
Enhanced Voice Over IP (e.g. Skype)	59	626	275	54	1014
Instant Messaging (e.g. AOL, Yahoo)	134	577	261	42	1014
Chat Rooms (e.g. Meebo)	117	534	317	46	1014
Discussion Boards	356	376	259	58	1049
Virtual Worlds (e.g. Second Life)	37	749	142	80	1008
Courseware (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle)	103	508	323	61	995
				Other (please specify)	185
				<i>answered question</i>	<b>1165</b>
				<i>skipped question</i>	<b>118</b>

## Discussion

The work of ALA units outside face-to-face meetings has grown over the last five years. ALA members have found ways to correspond with one another, with or without the support of ALA. E-mail is the leading tool for communication between conferences. Any communication tools that ALA can provide would be welcome to the community, especially VOIP (Voice over IP—Internet telephony, such as Skype), instant messaging, and chat. Many of the comments highlighted the need for technology such as wikis and blogs. Respondents expressed concern that any tools used be accessible for all members—not just those who are differently-abled, but also those whose institutions limit access or whose equipment is not high-end.

## Quotes from the Field

"Thank goodness for email, which allows me to participate on committees, because I hardly ever attend conference."

"It is vitally important that ALA electronic participation not be limited to specific applications. ALA should endorse open technologies and platforms, and not purchase or require proprietary software for the task."



**Question 3. Please rate the effectiveness of these tools for ALA committees, task forces, interest groups and other units.**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not Aware/ Don't Know</b>	<b>Not At All Effective</b>	<b>Somewhat Effective</b>	<b>Rather Effective</b>	<b>Very Effective</b>	<b>Response Count</b>	
Email	68	3	126	378	546	1121	
Telephone	208	41	213	285	349	1096	
Enhanced Voice Over IP (e.g. Skype)	778	27	76	92	55	1028	
Instant Messaging (e.g. AOL, Yahoo)	640	50	139	118	82	1029	
Chat Rooms (e.g. Meebo)	659	43	123	135	77	1037	
Discussion Boards	501	37	174	209	121	1042	
Virtual Worlds (e.g. Second Life)	808	124	66	27	9	1034	
Courseware (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle)	705	47	106	108	50	1016	
Other (please specify)						96	
						<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>1123</b>
						<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>160</b>

## **Discussion**

E-mail, discussion boards, and telephone were rated as the most effective tools for ALA work between conferences, though other technologies such as instant messaging and chat had their adherents. Facebook, wikis, and collaborative workspaces such as Google Documents also received write-in votes, sometimes accompanied by spirited comments scolding the committee for omitting these tools. Many respondents commented that

technology should be used to enhance the work of ALA, and not chosen for "technology's sake"—suggesting the need for training.

### **Quotes from the Field**

"While ALA has long held to the policy of...f2f meetings, there is not one committee I have been on in the last several years that did not do a significant part of its work either by e-mail or phone. ALA policy has been lagging behind reality."

"I believe that there is a real advantage to being able to conduct business via electronic tools but I would not participate in a unit of ALA that functions only in a virtual manner. I think face-to-face is important."

**Question 4. In the last five years, have you participated on an ALA committee, task force, interest group or other unit that exclusively conducted its work face-to-face at conferences?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
	Yes	26.7%
No	71.7%	804
Don't Know	1.6%	18
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>1122</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>161</b>

### Discussion

This data demonstrates both the changing nature of the work of the Association and the "hybrid" quality of Association activities. We don't have data for the periods previous to the "Internet age," but few among us would question that the work patterns for ALA membership have been affected by the advent of electronic communication. Nevertheless, one in four respondents had in the last five years participated in ALA work that was conducted exclusively face-to-face.

An interesting question is how much of the face-to-face committee activity is a result of practice and policy, versus need. Additionally, for ALA members for whom participation is essential to promotion or tenure, face-to-face attendance may be a "forced march," as some of the comments indicated—and there is indication some members may be shopping for committees that offer more flexible participation models.

### Quotes from the Field

"Even if groups still rely on Midwinter and Annual meetings to conduct business, they would get a lot more done if more discussion happened between conferences. Many groups waste a lot of time catching up at meetings."

"Some of us in ALA have been participating electronically, occasionally supplemented by phone, since approximately 1990. It's not new to many of us."

"I am in a tenure track position and the committees I choose to be involved with require that I attend face to face meetings. I can honestly say that I will rethink the necessity of participating on committees that have this requirement in the future because I do not receive enough support to attend multiple conferences a year, which is where these meetings usually take place."

**Question 5. If answering yes to the above [Question 4], have you voted face-to-face at conferences?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	32.9%	261
No	11.5%	91
Don't know	1.6%	13
Skip	54.0%	428
<i>answered question</i>		<b>793</b>

### **Discussion**

Only 46% of survey respondents answered this question, in part because the preceding question narrowed the response group to ALA members who had participated in ALA units that exclusively met face-to-face at conferences. In other words, the actual percentages are misleading, because 300 members had responded yes to question 5.

With that in mind, nearly 90% of those answering yes to question 4 (261 out of 300) reported that they had indeed gone on to vote face-to-face at conferences. It is hard to infer anything else meaningful from this question beyond that for some units of the Association, face-to-face participation continues to thrive, though the comments in the survey indicate that some members who are participating face-to-face would prefer more options in the future. A few respondents argued that actual unit votes should only take place in face-to-face meetings.

### **Quotes from the Field**

"As travel costs increase and institutional travel allocations decrease, the frequency of my attendance at ALA conferences will decrease. I welcome the opportunity to participate in ALA activities via technological means rather than in-person."

"There is a distinction between discussion between conferences and actually voting. Your survey misses this distinction. I am in favor of more discussion, but voting should generally be limited to conferences face-to-face."

"One of the biggest drawbacks to participating in ALA and its divisions is the meeting attendance requirements. Little of the actual work requires face-to-face meetings (especially not twice a year). The tremendous institutional, personal, and environmental costs are not justified. ALA is widely viewed as treating conferences as cash cows and trying to push as many to attend as possible."

**Question 6. In the last five years, have you participated on an ALA committee, task force, interest group or other unit that conducted its work BOTH face-to-face at conference and online or virtually before or after conference?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71.0%	792
No	26.5%	295
Don't Know	2.5%	28
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>1115</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>168</b>

### Discussion

An interesting characteristic of this survey question was the high number of responses. Over two-thirds reported participating in a "hybrid" manner in ALA activities—face-to-face and virtually.

Some respondents commented that face-to-face interaction is essential to committee work and that online interaction should only supplement it. More common reactions from ALA members noted that being required to participate face-to-face was not the same as preferring it.

### Quotes from the Field

"While I truly love to meet people in person and I think a lot of work is accomplished with face-to-face meetings, the electronic aspect is just as important. Virtual committee membership should be available for EVERY committee for a variety of reasons. For the past few years I have struggled with the desire to attend conferences knowing that air travel is not a wise environmental choice. I can't give up on ALA committee work, though, because it's what keeps me a vibrant librarian!!"

"Unless the committee deals with online resources (such as a committee that works on a wiki or finds great web resources), I feel that face-to-face communication is important to committee work. I don't mind if it's supplemented by online or telephone conferencing, but I'd hate to see the face-to-face component taken away."

"While the use of email and other electronic tools help facilitate committee work, it is also nice to meet your colleagues face to face at conferences."

7. If answering yes to the question above [Question 6, about hybrid participation], have you voted by phone, online, or through another method such as email or chat in addition to face-to-face at conference?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	52.8%	532
No	25.4%	256
Don't know	1.7%	17
Skip	20.1%	202
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>1007</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>276</b>

## Discussion

Over half of the respondents to this question reported participating in unit votes electronically as well as face-to-face. The tone in the comments was matter-of-fact, and focused on the value of participating year-round in the work of the Association, so that decision-making is not arbitrarily limited to being conducted face-to-face at conferences.

A number of respondents noted that very little committee work involves voting per se—that most work is collaborative, consensus-based, and ongoing.

## Quotes from the field

“To be successful and productive, committees must work in between conferences—the old model of working only at conferences simply doesn't work any more, so it is important that a variety of tools be available to facilitate virtual participation, not only for virtual members, who should be ‘full’ voting members, as well as for those who are able to meet face to face.”

“In general, voting is irrelevant to the committees in which I participate. We do a lot of work online—we communicate, create and comment on products that the committee is producing, and conduct planning activities for things to happen at conference.”

“The tools are in place, we just need an organization that is willing to use them, and in my estimation we have such an organization... we just need to operationalize their use more and make it more beneficial to work in this way. The time has come, let's move with great vigor in this direction.”

**Question 8. In the last five years, have you participated on an ALA committee, task force, interest group or other unit that conducted its work exclusively online or virtually before or after conference?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	21.7%	241
No	75.7%	840
Don't Know	2.5%	28
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>1109</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>174</b>

## Discussion

Fully one in five respondents had participated in an ALA unit that had conducted its work exclusively online or virtually before or after conference. (The question had some ambiguity—did respondents understand this meant no face-to-face meeting had taken place?—but clearly tilted toward heavy e-activities.)

Considering ALA policy and practice encouraging (or even requiring) face-to-face meetings, and the fact that hundreds of meeting rooms continue to be used at ALA Midwinter meetings and Annual conferences, this is an intriguing finding.

In the comments section for Question 4, some members observed that working between conferences has been around for a while.

## Quotes from the Field

“Beyond the direct costs of conference participation, that may or may not be covered by employers, there are significant environmental costs that build with thousands of people flying cross country twice a year. Think of the example that could be set if we make a commitment to do this and do it right...because virtual participation doesn't work at every step, but it sure would work at a lot of them.”

“With budgets declining and members spread out over the country, it is more realistic to allow virtual membership on committees and that votes taken virtually count.”

“It is normal for other associations I participate in at the national and international level to conduct work online to reduce cost and inconvenience of travelling to meetings. I strongly believe that committed members can work effectively online if given the tools and ability to do so.”

**Question 9. In answering yes to Question 8, have you voted by phone, online, or through another method such as email or chat?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	23.8%	189
No	10.9%	87
Don't know	1.1%	9
Skip	64.2%	510
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>795</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>488</b>

### Discussion

Of the respondents answering yes to Question 8, 24% indicated that they had voted by phone, online, or through e-mail or chat. Eleven percent said no, and 510 respondents skipped the question.

The large number of respondents skipping Question 9 hints that perhaps even more work is done using these methods, but that possibly due to ALA policy, the respondents did not want to admit to this activity.

### Quotes from the Field

“I was thrilled to learn several years ago that the ALSC Quicklist Consulting Committee met virtually. It allowed me to contribute to the organization, ‘meet’ other members, and learn from the experience.”

“The committee I served on used email discussion to come to consensus on decisions, which I associated with ‘Vote.’”



**Question 10. In the last five years, have you ever declined to participate on a committee, task force, interest group or other unit because you were unable to attend one or more face-to-face meetings?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	36.9%	401
No	63.1%	686
	Other (please specify)	71
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>1087</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>196</b>

### Discussion

Almost 37% of the people who responded to this question, or over 1 in 3, claimed that they had at least once declined to participate in the governance of ALA in the last five years because they were unable to attend one or more face-to-face meetings. Many of the respondents commented that funding and time off is a barrier to participation.

### Quotes from the Field

"I resigned from a technology program committee because I could not attend all of the meetings at Annual and Midwinter [conferences]. I asked to be a virtual member (this was after all a technology committee) and was told categorically NO."

"Had to decline chairmanship of a committee because could not be given guarantee of release time to attend conference."

"I would be more interested in participating in ALA committees if I didn't have the 2 out of 4 Annual Conference attendance requirement. Money isn't always that easy to come by, and the lack of funds limit travel to such conferences."

**Question 11. Have you ever been a "Virtual Member" of an ALA committee, task force or other unit? (A "Virtual Member" is defined in Policy 6.16 as a participatory but non-voting committee member)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	11.1%	124
No	88.9%	995
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>1119</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>164</b>

### Discussion

Out of over 1,100 respondents, only 124 have participated in an ALA committee as a "Virtual Member" in the strictest sense, as defined in ALA Policy 6.16—a non-voting member who does not count toward a quorum. Some enjoyed their work, but others were very discouraged by it. If little work is done between conferences, the Virtual Member may be left out of the work of the committee. This may be compounded by the “figurehead” nature of virtual membership, which could reinforce the idea that the “real work” of committees happens at face-to-face meetings.

Responses to other survey questions suggest that committees that fully and equally engage all members, face-to-face and virtual, in their work and decision-making (regardless of ALA policy) may be more successful. This could be further proof of the invalidity of the “separate but equal” doctrine.

### Quotes from the Field

"I served on a virtual committee but felt like my time was wasted. We did not get to vote and the chair made all of the decisions and when a committee member suggested an idea they were always discouraged and the chair was right."

"I have done this and enjoyed participating in this way. Even though you may do as much (sometimes more) work as regular members, being 'virtual' connotes somehow that you are not a full participant, even when this is not the case. A negative effect of this is that this perception may have some bearing on how administration sees your work in regards to promotion and tenure."

"I've served as a 'virtual member' on a committee, however there was very little discussion by this committee prior to the annual conference. All work was done at the conference and I was not asked for my opinion in advance. If I had not been able to attend the conference I would not have been participating at all!"

**Question 12. As a virtual member, what activities have you participated in?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Participated</b>	<b>Did Not Participated</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Drafting or reviewing documents	90	12	5	6	113
Planning conference programs and other conference activities	58	30	6	16	110
Selecting books or other materials for 'best of' lists or awards	23	36	5	39	103
Making recommendations that would result in policy changes for the Association	43	26	11	28	108
Making recommendations that would result in changes to professional standards or practices	45	25	7	28	105
Discussing governance issues	46	27	7	30	110
Voting on committee actions	54	28	7	21	110
Other (please specify)					23
<i>answered question</i>					<b>118</b>

**Discussion**

Drafting and reviewing documents and planning conference activities were the most popular activities for virtual members. Some respondents commented that committee members collaborate on discussion and documents, but that rather than vote, members seek consensus to move work forward.

**Quotes from the Field**

"I served on an awards jury that conducted all of its substantive work between August-December, including a shared spreadsheet of applicants on Google documents and spreadsheets; email sharing of preliminary considerations and "straw-votes"; 2 conference calls to consider and vote on the applicants. ... Our single meeting at Midwinter merely ratified our agreement and was used to evaluate the process. ... This was one of the most productive ALA groups I've served on, and very engaging."

**Question 13. If you were unable to attend face-to-face meetings, would you accept a nomination as a virtual member of an ALA committee or task force?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	91.3%	115
No	8.7%	11
	Please Explain Why or Why Not?	38
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>126</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1157</b>

**Discussion**

91.3% of the 126 respondents for this question would accept a nomination as a virtual member of a committee. In the open-ended comment section of the survey, respondents commented repeatedly on the high cost and inconvenience of travel. Others are unable to attend conferences for family reasons, and stated that ALA should work towards allowing full and meaningful participation in committees in a virtual format. Others pointed out that much of the work of the organization occurs between meetings.

**Quotes from the Field**

"I feel that if everyone discusses online it gives people more time to think about issues and honestly respond better than fitting everything in a 2 hour meeting at Annual. Therefore I would happily participate virtually because to me the meeting at Annual would only be a few hours in a very long conversation."

"Some committees appear to make good use of their virtual committee members, while others do not. I would accept this in hope that this committee would make good use of their virtual memberships. I also believe that with the cost of travel continually increasing, it will be more and more difficult for many to make face-to-face committee meetings (where unfortunately, a lot of the action still happens for most committees)."

14. For the following statements please share whether you personally agree or disagree...

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
Electronic tools are indispensable for ALA committee work	43	9	38	168	821	1079
The committee I am on increasingly uses electronic tools to conduct work between conferences	36	29	270	224	448	1007
I'd be more likely to serve on a committee that votes on issues online	55	55	256	260	448	1074
I'd be more likely to serve on a committee that engages in discussions outside of conference	42	25	148	293	566	1074
Other (please specify)						48
<b>answered question</b>						<b>1087</b>
skipped question						196

**Discussion**

Of the 1,079 members responding to the following statement: “Electronic tools are indispensable for ALA committee work,” 76% were strongly in agreement while 92% were

either strongly or moderately in agreement. The overwhelming majority of respondents believed that electronic tools are essential and here to stay. Among the comments were impatient remarks such as “duh” and “It’s the 21st Century, get with the picture.”

The 1,007 responses were less dramatically affirmative in describing how committees actually work. 67% were strongly or moderately in agreement with the statement “The committee I am currently on increasingly uses electronic tools to conduct work between conferences.” Implicit in these results is the suggestion that committees could accomplish more online.

Similarly, 66% of the 1,074 respondents indicated strong or moderate agreement with the statement that they would be “more likely to serve on a committee that votes on issues online.” About 24% were unsure and 10% were not in agreement with this statement since they “seldom see voting in committee work.” The two-thirds majority were, however, in favor of the ideas that full participation with voting privileges and the ability to get more committee work accomplished between conferences were important considerations.

A much stronger majority of 80% was moderately or strongly in agreement with the statement “I’d be more likely to serve on a committee that engages in discussions outside of Conference.” Only 6% of the 1,074 of the respondents were in disagreement. Many of the comments added by the respondents emphasized the inability to attend Annual Conferences and Midwinter Meetings. Affordability and time pressures were cited as reasons for affirming electronic participation.

A significant minority of the comments by members reflected the desire to continue with face-to-face meetings in addition to moving ahead with greater emphasis upon electronic participation, but the overwhelming majority of respondents were convinced that electronic participation was not only essential, but increasingly commonplace in the 21st Century.

### **Quotes from the Field**

“More work can be accomplished if work is done throughout the year.”

“Travel funds are not provided at my workplace. Virtual participation is the only way I can participate.”

“It is normal for other associations I participate in at the national and international level to conduct work online to reduce cost and inconvenience of travelling to meetings. I strongly believe that committed members can work effectively online if given the tools and ability to do so.”

**Question 15. If ALA were to adopt more electronic methods of participation on committees, task forces, interest groups or other unit and work groups, please rate the following by how important or not important each would be to you personally.**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not Aware/ Don't Know</b>	<b>Not At All Important</b>	<b>Only Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Rather Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Response Count</b>	
Require members to post a notice in advance when committees plan to take formal action	39	29	108	343	557	1076	
Provide tools for recording and publishing the transcripts of e-meetings	18	25	131	374	527	1075	
Ensure archives are easy to find, search, browse and access	13	9	57	327	667	1073	
Limit the use of electronic tools	119	629	189	85	33	1055	
Other (please specify)						62	
						<i>answered question</i>	<b>1080</b>
						<i>skipped question</i>	<b>203</b>

## Discussion

These survey respondents strongly favor employing technologies for conducting the business of the Association. They want technology to be used responsibly in our professional forums (in accordance with standard practices for business etiquette), and expect that technologies would be broadly accessible and that the results of e-participation would be easily accessible for digestion/use.

## Quotes from the Field



"The limit of the tools would depend on the technical access the committee members would have to the various tools available."

"IF AND ONLY IF the electric tools are FULLY ACCESSIBLE according to ALA's Accessibility Policy."

**Question 16. Please make any comments you would like for the TFOEMP.**

Question 16 was an open-ended comments section which had 369 comments, out of 1283 total responses to the survey.

**Discussion**

The comments in this section underscore that respondents were largely favorable toward increasing electronic participation—in many cases, the sooner the better. Some stated that e-participation is desperately needed, especially when compared with the cost of attending two semi-annual conferences in person.

Many respondents suggested that e-participation would increase levels of participation in general, that more work could actually be accomplished, and that work delays between conferences would be minimized. The impact on the environment was another issue raised in the comments, with a number of respondents stating that e-participation (and therefore, less face-to-face meeting attendance) would reduce the carbon footprint of the Association and its work.

Comments also surfaced about ensuring “sunshine” in a virtual environment. Transparency is an important guiding principle for employing technology communications for business, and ALA has long held to open meeting policies which need reinterpretation for new tools in a new era. But the need to maintain closed lists when necessary and appropriate should not be overlooked.

A number of respondents turned tables on the survey, recommending not just e-participation between conferences, but also electronic methods for engaging remote members at conferences and broadcasting on-site conference meetings and events.

Some respondents suggested ALA provide technologies to facilitate participation. One or two expressed concern that ALA’s track record with selecting and implementing technology has been uneven, while others stated that ALA did not need to provide technologies but encourage their use through changes in policy and practice, and (it was repeatedly noted) member training.

Though the survey itself did not ask about eliminating Midwinter meetings, this came up repeatedly in the comments.

Respondents are expecting to see the results of this survey. In reading through the full set of these Q16 comments, we on the reports team concurred (through iterative, gradual consensus) that these comments should be shared with ALA’s Executive Board and with the executive directors of each unit (including the Executive Director of ALA) so that these stakeholders can assess the challenges presented to the Association by the respondents.

### **Quotes from the Field: Improved Participation**

"Even if groups still rely on Midwinter and Annual meetings to conduct business, they would get a lot more done if more discussion happened between conferences. Many groups waste a lot of time catching up at meetings."

"For the (over 20) years that I've been an active divisional committee and board member and a chapter councilor, Council has whined about not getting a quorum at membership meetings. Virtual participation will engage many more members than those tedious membership meetings."

"There should be some recognition that at the smaller levels of the organization people are accomplishing a lot [virtually] and should be encouraged to do so without needless restriction."

### **Quotes from the Field: Barriers to E-Participation**

"My library does not allow chat (even for staff) and I know of others that do not, so this would be an issue for some people wanting to be on a committee."

"Please remember the training side of this movement. People need training and communication. Self paced tutorials are excellent tools, as are page avatars."

### **Quotes from the Field: Cost and Environmental Issues**

"The persistence of large face-to-face meetings twice a year is a travesty in this time of great fuel demand. Other professions and disciplines are already making this transition. ALA should be a leader in the effort."

"I think that for environmental reasons alone more work within ALA should be done electronically or regionally to begin to reduce all the travel necessary to attend conferences."

"I do not believe it is efficient, effective, or moral to require participation via face-to-face conference attendance twice a year."

### **Quotes from the Field: "Virtualizing" Our Face-to-Face Activities**

"Council and membership meetings should be broadcast online. All members should have remote on-demand access to hearing and ideally also seeing the full ALA Council, ALA membership meetings."

"I would love to see ALA capture video and audio of conference programs and help the divisions do the same. That would be a good use of money."

"We need to absolutely move toward online continuing education and meetings, and more electronic publication."

### **Quotes from the Field: Midwinter Meeting**

“If basic tasks and voting on issues could be done online we might be able to cut back on the number of days a participant would have to attend the conference or eliminate completely one of the two, my preference being Midwinter.”

“Though I prefer the Midwinter Meeting to the Annual Conference in many ways, moving to one meeting per year might increase participation and it would certainly lighten the financial, time, and ecological burdens incurred with semi-annual cross-country travel.”

“Cost and difficulty of travel to midwinter make it impossible for many librarians to participate in the committee structure.”

# APPENDIX B

1980-81 ALA COUNCIL  
DOCUMENT 24

## OPEN MEETING POLICY: An Interpretive Statement Of the American Library Association

The policy on Open Meetings, 7.4.3., reads as follows:

"All meetings of the American Library Association and its units are open to all members and to members of the press. Registration requirements apply. Closed meetings may be held only for the discussion of matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions."

The American Library Association is a national educational association with an organizational pattern of units and sub-units with distributed responsibility for the conduct and accomplishment of its business. As a membership association, its structure, procedures, and actions do not parallel public or governmental bodies.

In support of its goal of promoting and improving library service and librarianship, the ALA conducts activities such as: developing standards; accrediting library school programs; granting scholarships, awards, and other recognitions; developing and conducting continuing education programs; publishing monographs and periodicals; reviewing and recommending publications; publicizing library needs and services; recommending legislation; providing advisory assistance; conducting many other projects and programs related to the development or improvement of library services.

Many of these activities require discussion by a planning or evaluating group, and an assessment of individual or institutional achievement. Questions have been raised concerning the manner in which the Open Meeting Policy relates to ALA's activities.

In implementing the above policy, the following general concepts should be kept in mind:

Personnel assessment areas in association activities should be structured so that no individual's right to privacy will be abridged or endangered.

Discussions of confidential information regarding an institution should not abridge the institution's right to privacy.

Information regarding individuals and institutions may be considered by the individual or institution to be confidential or highly sensitive (private) at one date, but public information at a later date; the association may need to take timing into account in identifying specific matters of privacy.

ALA members and other interested persons should be encouraged to attend meetings where business is conducted; closed meetings should be planned only when they are essential to protect privacy.

Matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions frequently include such areas as:

Deliberations concerning the performance of personal members, or institutions, or paid staff of the ALA and its units.

Deliberations concerning professional achievements, contributions, and qualifications of members being considered for office.

Deliberations concerning the qualifications of individuals or institutions being considered for grants, scholarships, or similar recognition.

Deliberation concerning the ability of an institution to meet published criteria or standards.

Deliberations concerning contractual matters, and matters with legal or financial implication for individuals or institutions.

Deliberations concerning awards to individuals for achievements and/or creative works.

Deliberations concerning awards to institutions or organizations.

The work of the Association should normally be accomplished at the Annual and Midwinter meetings, in sessions open to all of the membership. It is the responsibility of the chair of each unit to insure that the spirit of the open meeting policy is enforced. Each chairperson should identify any need for a closed portion of a meeting at the time the meeting is announced; that fact should be made known in advance. No matters other than those requiring protection of privacy may be discussed during that time period. All actions taken in closed session must be reported to the membership of the parent unit and made public at the earliest possible time after the closed session.

Although a unit's workload may be such that some of its business must be conducted through correspondence or meetings held outside of conference, notice of meetings held outside of Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting must be announced prior to the meeting and the results of the meeting made public at the earliest possible time.

Question or complaints regarding adherence to the Open Meeting Policy should be addressed to the chief officer of the governing unit.

January 31, 1981

APPENDIX C

**Excerpts from Board Responses Regarding the "Open Lists" Question**

The following excerpts were a part of the message concerning open lists that was sent to Council from Janet Swan Hill (Task Force Chair) on 2/20/2008

**FROM ALCTS:**

" In-person, face-to-face discussions and online discussions may both be free-ranging and can easily touch on a variety of topics, both general and sensitive, inter-changeably. However, in the face-to-face environment, it is possible to quickly and easily interrupt or postpone discussion, whereas in an online forum the visual cues that face-to-face discourse provides are lacking. Participants in online forums need to be confident that, if a discussion includes sensitive topics, the discussion will remain private and confidential. In the electronic environment, with a discussion list that is open to all, that security is impossible to guarantee.

The Executive Committee evaluated the suggestion that committees maintain two discussion lists: one for discussion of non-sensitive topics and a second list for sensitive matters. We concluded that such an arrangement would be a totally unwieldy. Rather than facilitating free discussion, it would stifle discussion, since sensitive and non-sensitive matters could easily be intermixed in the course of a single exchange. Such a plan would impede committee work and make it more difficult and labor-intensive to carry out the business of the association.

The online discussion lists often deal with topics, while not sensitive per se, that explore ideas or plans in a formative stage of development. If online committee discussions are open, the risk exists that these emerging ideas would be publically discussed before they had been thoroughly vetted. This is a very worrisome prospect.

Face-to-face communication and online communication occur in two totally different environments and the etiquette of the former is not transferable to the latter.

**FROM ACRL:**

- What were the problems/issues that precipitated the need and/or requests for open lists?
- Does the proposal to open up discussion lists "fix" any of these identified problems?
- Board discussions on a list are fluid with many ideas shared before decisions are reached. Having these thoughts open throughout the process prior to closure for all to see may be counterproductive.
- Board discussions may involve confidential issues relating to –among other things individual members, vendors, money and -for ACRL -real estate. This would cause parts of discussions to be moved off the list or risk the possibility of accidentally sharing sensitive information with anyone reading the list.
- Technical issues of managing numerous discussion lists with potentially large numbers of members seem daunting given ACRL's current infrastructure.
- Imposing an open list policy may drive certain ACRL sections to consider alternative means of communicating without using ALA run software.
- There needs to be a distinction drawn between synchronous (meetings) and asynchronous (email discussions) communications being open for anyone to read.

- Members of committees/boards may temper comments if they feel that they may be misconstrued or taken out-of-context by those reading the discussions.
- A resolution that would ask that all the majority of ALA lists be "read only" is unenforceable

There are certain discussion lists where list members may not be forthright in their comments and discussions if they knew that there were those lurking out there that might be privy to the discussion list, for example, heads of human resources, collection development librarians reviewing new products, divisions brainstorming a business strategy, etc. It might lead to discussions occurring off-list.

Lastly, any policy or resolution that would dictate whether lists that would be read only to any ALA member is difficult if not impossible to enforce. Although ALA might have the technology where any member could sign up for a list, it doesn't prevent lists potentially being moved off of ALA servers or having off-line discussions taking place. Again, implementing policies that can't be enforced is not good business practice.



Appendix D

**COO Response to the Task Force on Electronic Member Participation on the elimination of non-voting virtual members and the addition of voting e-members.**

COO supports the move to incorporate electronic participation more fully into the make up and work of ALA committees. Making our current virtual members, who participate by electronic means but have no vote, regular voting members of committees opens full participation to those who cannot be present physically for conferences. In ending the current non-voting virtual member category which has never gained widespread use, ALA stops treating virtual members as second level participants. This seems desirable and should encourage greater involvement of our members in the work of the association. We can look forward to the day when designation by means of participation will not need to be an important consideration. While it is still important for members to congregate on a regular basis to discuss issues of concern, it is also important to broaden participation in new ways that are becoming integral to society. Social networking on all levels is increasingly becoming a lifestyle choice and a key tool, both at home and work for many people.

This move does raise issues of transition, function, and definitions. A time line for converting our current virtual members to full voting e-members needs to be developed. If e-members are henceforth voting members of the committee, then they will need to be considered in the total committee membership when determining a quorum. To not include them creates a situation where they are not counted even though they can vote. This puts the committee in the position of both counting them in the quorum (when they might attend a meeting or they vote electronically) and not counting them when they aren't in attendance. Since ALA follows Sturgis, unless the Bylaws or Constitution explicitly indicate a difference, Sturgis indicates that "a committee or a board requires a majority of its members for a quorum." A committee can meet without a quorum, can hear reports and discuss issues, but it may not vote on any actions. However, committees are already authorized to conduct votes "by mail, electronic system, or conference call, provided that all members are canvassed simultaneously" While all members need to be notified simultaneously, they do not need to vote at the same moment. The committee can set a time limit for the completion of the vote, however a two-thirds affirmative vote of a quorum of the body is necessary to pass the resolution." (ALA Bylaws Article VIII, Sec. 8)

It would behoove ALA to be both nimble and flexible when setting up the operating size and method of operation for committees. Some committees can accomplish nearly all of their work electronically. Others may be able to work electronically but need to meet physically to take testimony, receive timely business from other committees, or to discuss and debate important issues. Perhaps, we need to fine tune the committee composition and appointment process to include a real snapshot of each committee and what its needs are in terms of e-members vs. in person members. We assume that all members will be able to participate electronically, but that certain members (our designated e-members) will not be required to participate in person although they would have the option to do that as well. Some committees may want to explore real time remote participation by e-members at meetings held at conferences, or real time virtual meetings held at other times of the year. ALA is already testing collaborative virtual workspace for ALA committees through Drupal. Both the seamless and effective nature of the method of delivery and the cost to the association are factors that would play a major role in how a committee conducted its business. If ALA establishes electronic meeting rooms, then the virtual infrastructure costs should become part of the overhead

costs for conducting the business of the association and thus not involve added costs for members to participate. COO could establish e-member levels for each committee initially as part of the composition. From there, immediate past and current committee chairs, ALA EB Liaisons, the two ALA committees that deal with appointments, and the ALA President-elect can certainly make recommendations and tailor appointments to create a workable ratio of regular and e-members on each committee even if all of the members have voting rights. It only takes half of the total membership plus one to constitute a working quorum. It has even been suggested that a committee could have X number of e-members and that the total membership under the guidance of the chair, trade these slots as needed to accomplish the work of the committee.

Since e-members would be full members of the committee then their appointment would count as one of the three appointments allowed under current ALA policy.

The option to participate actively as an e-member of an ALA committee needs to be publicized during the committee volunteer process. ALA presidents have been very receptive to those who indicate their interest by completing the Committee Volunteer form. As part of that process, members can indicate which participation option they would be able to honor.

Since we are in a constantly evolving virtual world, we need to come up with a hybrid system that allows for a sliding scale of face-to-face and electronic asynchronous and synchronous participation methods that will serve the needs of each committee as communication methods change. The needs of each committee as they tackle their work in support of ALA's goals and mission should be the determining factor in deciding method-of-participation numbers and processes. There are economic barriers for our members in being able to physically attend our meetings, but there are also economic barriers for ALA to provide seamless, real time remote participation in face-to-face meetings for all those who might desire or need it.

Whatever system we set up to enable electronic participation, ALA's Open Meeting Policy needs to be considered. It would be an ultimate irony if we opened the door to greater membership participation by electronic means and at the same time constructed barriers for the membership at large to be able to "look through the window" and monitor the proceedings of the organization. After all, access is an ALA Core Value. Certainly we can make resolutions and reports available through electronic postings for all members to see for a specified time before a final committee vote is taken. This could ultimately become a huge SharePoint site with sections for every ALA unit and committee to hold electronic "conversations" and post documents viewable by all ALA members.

It has been suggested that if ALA would experiment with electronic meeting methods in the operation of ALA Council then issues of quorum and voting and other factors that might affect electronic participation could be addressed which would then expand and sharpen our understanding of the issues and implications of other "meeting" settings.

Clearly, ALA membership expects the organization to move forward quickly to use electronic methods to expand access for members to play a role in governance. The TFOEMP seems poised and eager to start the process, even though the process by its very nature will need to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

**2008-2009 ALA CD #35  
2009 Midwinter Meeting**

APPENDIX E

For convenience during floor discussion, this appendix includes the text only of all TFOEMP recommendations. For details about relationship to other recommendations, referral to BARC, priority, and discussion, refer to full presentation in section 8.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 1: CD # 35.1**

*Encourage all units of the Association to engage in active experimentation with providing electronic access to non-governance activities. Non-governance activities include such things as conferences, pre-conferences, programs, major addresses, awards ceremonies, and other sessions during which official Association business is not conducted. Experimentation should be with regard both to types of access provided, and to fiscal models for supporting such access. To assist in evaluation, information about participation, satisfaction, actual cost, overhead, etc. should be kept and analyzed, and shared with the Budget Analysis and Review Committee.*

**RECOMMENDATION 2: CD #35.2**

*Adopt a new interpretation of Policy 7.4.4 (Open Meetings) as follows:*

**Interpretation of the Policy on Open Meetings (7.4.4)**

The policy on Open Meetings, 7.4.4., reads as follows:

“All meetings of the American Library Association and its units are open to all members and to members of the press. Registration requirements apply. Closed meetings may be held only for the discussion of matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions.”

The primary purpose of the policy on Open Meetings is to facilitate transparency of Association governance. No member should ever feel that there are Association related decisions made where he or she was prevented from finding information, raising concerns or expressing opinion. Meetings of the Association’s committees and boards held at its Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference are in general open to all interested members and members of the press who choose to attend. It should be noted that attendance at meetings is only one of many ways of finding out about the work of the Association. The work and decisions of the Association and its Units are made available through a variety of means, including publications, Websites, etc.

The American Library Association is a national educational association with an organizational pattern of units and sub-units with distributed responsibility for the conduct and accomplishment of its business. As a membership association, its structure, procedures, and actions do not parallel public or governmental bodies.

In support of its goal of promoting and improving library service and librarianship, the ALA conducts activities such as: developing standards; accrediting library school programs; granting scholarships, awards, and other recognitions; developing and conducting continuing education programs; publishing monographs and periodicals; reviewing and recommending publication; publicizing library needs and services; recommending legislation; providing

advisory assistance; conducting many other projects and programs related to the development or improvement of library services.

Many of these activities require discussion by a planning or evaluating group, and an assessment of individual or institutional achievement. Questions have been raised concerning the manner in which the Open Meeting Policy relates to ALA activities.

In implementing the above policy, the following general concepts should be kept in mind:

- Personnel assessment areas in Association activities should be structured so that no individual's right to privacy will be abridged or endangered.
- Discussions of confidential information regarding an institution should not abridge the institution's right to privacy.
- Information regarding individuals and institutions may be considered by the individual or institution to be confidential or highly sensitive (private) at one date, but public information at a later date; the Association may need to take timing into account in identifying specific matters of privacy.
- ALA members and other interested persons should be encouraged to attend meetings where business is conducted; closed meeting should be planned only when they are essential to protect privacy.

Matters affecting the privacy of individuals or institutions call for a meeting or a portion of a meeting to be closed to all except members of the body holding the meeting, and invited attendees. Matters calling for a closed session include (but are not limited to) such areas as:

- Deliberations concerning the performance of personal members, or institutions, or paid staff of the ALA and its units.
- Deliberations concerning professional achievements, contributions and qualification of members being considered for office.
- Deliberations concerning the qualifications of individuals or institutions being considered for grants, scholarships or similar recognition.
- Deliberations concerning the ability of an institution to meet published criteria or standards.
- Deliberations concerning contractual matters, and matters with legal or financial implications for individuals or institutions.
- Deliberations concerning awards to individuals for achievement and/or creative works.
- Deliberations concerning awards to institutions or organizations.

Much of the work of the Association is accomplished during meetings held as part of the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. These meetings are listed in the official conference program and are open to all conference attendees who are physically present, except under circumstances such as those identified above. Meetings, all of which are closed, are identified as such in the conference or meeting program. Many of the Association's

committees and boards find it necessary and efficient also to schedule meetings outside of Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. These meetings may be held face to face, by telephone, or by electronic means. Costs and logistics may prevent ALA from enabling universal access to these meetings. Individuals interested in attending any of these outside of conference meetings, either physically or virtually, should contact the appropriate chair to express interest in attending. If attendance can be accommodated, a fee may be charged to cover the cost of enabling it.

It is the responsibility of the chair of each committee, board, etc. to insure that the spirit of the open meeting policy is enforced, to identify in advance of a meeting any need to close a portion of it, and to make that fact known in advance. Notwithstanding the requirement to identify the need for closed discussion in advance, it is recognized that matters may arise in the course of a meeting that necessitate closing a portion of a meeting.

No matters other than those requiring protection of privacy may be discussed during a closed portion of a meeting. All actions taken in closed session must be reported to the membership of the parent unit and made public at the earliest possible time after the closed session.

Although a unit's workload may be such that some of its business must be conducted through meetings held outside of Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting, in accordance with Policy 7.4.2, notice of such meetings must be announced ten days prior to the meeting and the results of the meeting must be made public no fewer than 30 days after the meeting's conclusion.

Questions regarding adherence to the Open Meeting Policy should be addressed to the chief officer of the governing unit.

January 31, 1981; revised January xx, 2009

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 3: CD #35.3**

*Adopt the following policy addressing the openness of between-meeting activities of committees and boards.*

Policy on Open Activities, # TBD

All activities of the committees, boards, etc. of the American Library Association and its units should be conducted as openly as is feasible. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the American Library Association that all governance related activities, sponsored by the ALA or one of its units, taking place outside of official meetings should be accessible to the membership of the sponsoring body.

As with ALA's Open Meetings Policy, #7.4.4, the primary purpose of the policy on Open Activities is to facilitate transparency of the Association's governance. The policy is intended to cover all activities of committees, boards, etc. of the Association and its units that take place between the meetings held at the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference and other official meetings scheduled between conferences. Activities such as communications, mailings, emails, discussion lists, blogs, etc. which do not meet the definition of a meeting, ALA Policy, #7.4.1, are examples of activities covered by this policy

Exceptions to this Open Activity Policy are permissible for committees, boards, etc. whose discussions frequently touch on matters of privacy regarding individuals, institutions, and/or

organizations, or where, in the opinion of the body, its work would be hindered by open member accessibility to discussions.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 4: CD #35.4**

*Eliminate Policy 6.16 (Virtual Members). In its place, enable appointment of full committee members who may attend meetings virtually only. Make no new committee appointments or reappointments to ALA-level committees under Policy 6.16 after January, 2009, and COO should not authorize addition of ALA-level committee members under Policy 6.16 after January, 2009. (Implementation of this recommendation requires revisions to Policy 4.5 (contained in Recommendation 5, CD #35.5)). In preparation for implementation of this recommendation, charge the new task force described in CDE #35.16 to make recommendations concerning issues such as appointment procedures, limitation to proportion of "e-participating" members on a committee; establishment of quorum, and any other measures specifically dealt with by Policy 6.16. The new task force should also address issues such as the extent of the Association's responsibility to provide electronic access for committee members to meetings of their committee, and the responsibility of those participating electronically to support their own access to meetings. Additionally, the new task force should consider whether a separate policy, specifically authorizing the appointment of committee members whose attendance will be electronic only needs to be written, or if revision of 4.5 is sufficient. If a separate policy or additional change to existing policy is needed, the new task force should write it.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 5: CD #35.5**

5. *Revise Policy 4.5 (Requirements for Committee Service) as follows:*

**4.5 Requirements for Committee Service**

**4.5.1 Membership.** Except as specifically authorized, members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies must be members in good standing of the group's parent organization.

**4.5.2 Participation.** Members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies are expected to participate in the work of the group. Participation includes both attendance at synchronous meetings scheduled in conjunction with the Midwinter Meeting or Annual Conference or at other times during the year, as well as contributions through asynchronous communication methods that may be utilized by the group outside of formal meetings. Attendance at meetings may be in person, or through other means that enable synchronous communication.

**4.5.3 Provision of explanation of absences.** Members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies are expected to provide explanation of their absences and/or inability to participate to the committee chair or unit secretary. Failure to provide adequate explanation of absences from two consecutive synchronous meetings or to participate otherwise in the work of the committee constitutes grounds for removal, upon request of the chair and approval of the appropriate appointing official or governing board.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 6: CD #35.6**

*Request that the Executive Director evaluate the ease, expense, and serviceability of various options to enable electronic participation in meetings that are at least partly face-to-face, and to provide guidance and instructions for committee chairs and members so that e-participation is made*

possible. Guidance and instructions should be reviewed and if necessary updated at least annually, to keep current with newly-available or changed options.

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 7: CD #35.7**

*Implement on an experimental basis some means of providing electronic access to Council activities in a timely manner. Such implementation constitutes a follow up on CD #59, "A Resolution on Expanding Council Transparency", passed at the Annual Conference, 2008. Implementation should take place no later than Annual Conference, 2009. Care should be taken that the means chosen provides access to all members, or that alternative means can be provided if necessary (e.g. if an audio podcast is provided, some means of access for the hearing impaired should also be investigated). BARC should be consulted in evaluating feasibility of possible mechanisms, and should be involved in the evaluation of the success of the experimental implementation. The success of the means chosen should be tracked and evaluated not only in terms of cost, but also considering ease of use by members, interest among the membership, and intangibles such as perception of openness, effectiveness, etc.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 8: CD #35.8**

*Once the Open Meetings Policy has been newly interpreted (see recommendation 2, CD #35.2), and CD#59 (see recommendation 7, CD #35.7) has been implemented, encourage all units of the Association to engage in active experimentation with providing electronic access to other governance activities where such access would not violate existing policy. Governance activities would include such meetings as business meetings of divisions and roundtables, meetings of committees, task forces, forums and assemblies where business may be conducted, etc. Experimentation should be with regard both to types of access provided, and to fiscal models for supporting such access. To assist in evaluation, information about participation, satisfaction, actual cost, overhead, etc. should be kept and analyzed, and shared with the Budget Analysis and Review Committee.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 9: CD #35.9**

*Request that the ALA Executive Director investigate possible means by which Council Members who are unable to attend Council meetings in person might participate in live discussions and vote electronically. Cost implications of such innovations should be identified. The Executive Director should work with BARC as he identifies and considers cost implications. A report on findings should be delivered to Council by the Annual Conference, 2009.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 10: CD #35.10**

*Charge the new task force described in CDE #35.16 to develop an Association position and policy statement regarding Online Communities. This new task force should consider such matters as: the importance of providing Online Communities to members; overlap with other mechanisms for forming different kinds of online affinity groups; appropriateness of Association hosting; and relationship to ALA-hosted discussion lists for committees. The policy statement should cover such matters as: the purpose of communities of interest; the appropriateness of Association support for such communities; the rights and obligations of members participating, etc.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 11: CD #35.11**

*Request that the ALA Executive Director investigate the feasibility of enabling votes of Council between Midwinter and Annual meetings. Investigation should cover possible means of carrying out such voting, as well as whether a provision similar to ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 8, which*

*authorizes electronic voting by committees should be written as a new section in ALA Bylaws, Article IV. Also to be considered are the parliamentary implications of such voting, what constitutes "being canvassed simultaneously," the fiscal implications of "mid-term" voting, and the impact that such an ability might have on the activities and role of the Executive Board vis-a-vis Council. BARC should be involved in any consideration of the fiscal implications of this capability.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 12: CD #35.12**

*Revise and clarify ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 8, concerning mail or e-mail ballots. The current text, which was originally written for the Executive Board, and then extended to committees, should be revised to cover all boards and committees at all levels of the Association. Clarify what "canvassed simultaneously" means (for example, if a question is put to a committee on its discussion list, is that "canvassing simultaneously?") Clarify the second sentence by adding: "for passage of any measure voted on by these means." This issue has been referred to Constitution and Bylaws, and the TF would be pleased to defer this recommendation and to consider it in conjunction with the Constitution and Bylaws report.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 13: CD #35.13**

*Revise ALA Bylaws, Article X, concerning notices and voting by mail to make it clear that this article refers only to votes of the entire membership. This issue has been referred to Constitution and Bylaws, and the TF would be pleased to defer this recommendation and to consider it in conjunction with the Constitution and Bylaws report.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 14: CD #35.14**

*Request the Executive Director to devise and implement a plan whereby member volunteers can be effectively informed of ALA policies regarding the conduct of ALA business, including the Open Meetings Policy; the definition of a meeting; how votes may be taken; the organizational bias toward openness of Association business, including that conducted between official meetings.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 15: CD #35.15**

❖  
*Charge the task force described in Recommendation Last, CD #35.last, to (1) survey the Association membership and leadership regarding interest in electronic participation in Association programming and governance, and (2) to develop a framework for prioritization of efforts aimed at increasing electronic participation in Association governance and programming, and to report to Council, no later than the Annual Meeting, 2010.*

❖ **RECOMMENDATION 16: CD #35.16**

*Appoint a new task force to address those matters identified in 35.4, 35.10 and 35.15. In order to accomplish these matters in a timely fashion, the new task force should be large enough to enable formation of subgroups addressing the discrete tasks. In order to assure continuity and to build upon the progress of the current TFOEMP, the new Task Force should include at least a near-majority of members of TFOEMP, plus representatives from the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC), and the Committee on Organization (COO), as well as at least one individual who has recently served as an appointing authority for ALA or one of its divisions or roundtables. The charge should be to (1) Develop an implementation plan for elimination of Virtual Members as described in CD 35.4 (2) Develop an Association position and policy statement regarding Online Communities; (3) Develop a framework for prioritization of efforts aimed at increasing electronic participation in Association governance and programming; (4) Bring to Council any other related*



*issues. (5) Complete any other work left unfinished by TFOEMP. The new task force should bring these documents to Council no later than the Midwinter, 2010 meetings.*