

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Nominating Committee Report for the 2013 ALA Election

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

For information purposes. No actions requested.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:

Nominating Committee for the 2013 ALA Election:

Nancy Davenport, Chair
Mario Ascencio
Trevor Dawes
Ling Hwey Jeng
Terri Kirk
Cynthia Richey
David Schuster
James F. Williams

[No action requested.]

CONTACT PERSON:

Nancy Davenport, Chair, Nominating Committee for the 2013 ALA Election, 703-819-5623,
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DRAFT OF MOTION:

None.

DATE: October 18, 2012

ATTACHMENT: Nominating Committee Report

Background: The Committee began its work at the 2012 Midwinter meeting by reviewing the work of the Committee for the 2012 election with its chair, Vivian Wynn. JoAnne Kempf of the ALA Governance Office provided the Committee with the timeline for the process, and lists of current Council members, former members of Council and a list those who ran unsuccessfully in the previous election. Our work was conducted in two face-to-face meetings, numerous conference calls, and through private space on ALA Connect. As we progressed, JoAnne created excel files of the potential candidates for each position based on the registration system's data.

How we worked: At our first committee meeting, we mapped our web of influence based on the ALA divisions, committees, caucuses, and groups (formal and informal) to which we belonged. We mapped our state and regional coverage, ties to chapter and state listservs, and alumni affiliations. Based on that analysis we began contacting people on the various lists and others we agreed would be good, potential candidates.

Treasurer and President-elect Two members, each well qualified and well matched to be ALA Treasurer, were strongly recommended to the Committee. And when asked, each expressed interest in running for election. With two BARC chairs interested in running for Treasurer, we looked no further as service on BARC is excellent preparation for understanding and explaining ALA's complicated finances. For President-elect, we had individuals who approached us and expressed interest in being considered for the ballot and we had recommendations from the Committee members and other member-leaders we turned to for advice. Our principal concern was recruiting two individuals who would be excellent ALA Presidents and create a ballot that was a level playing field for both candidates.

Council ALA Bylaws, Article III, Section 1 (c) stipulates that "the number of nominees shall not be fewer than one-and-one-half times the anticipated number of member-at-large vacancies to be filled at the next election." That meant we needed 50 candidates this year, and finding 50 people willing to run for Council was very hard. But we were ultimately successful in identifying 51 individuals interested in running for Council. When committee members contacted individuals, they heard the following reasons: "I've been on the ballot several times and lost. Why would I want to run again?" "I can't stay at conference long enough to attend all the Council meetings." "I get no financial support from my library so if I come to ALA, it has to be for the shortest time possible." "My library no longer gives released time to attend conferences and I have to reserve some of my vacation time for my family." "My administrator will NOT give released time for Council as she thinks it is a joke." Over and over we heard that there is a lack of respect for Council and when this is added to the financial and time obligations an individual must assume, there seems little point in running -- particularly if doing so would look like an exercise in bad judgment to one's supervisor.

Observations: Serving in a leadership role in a division or on a division or ALA committee is seen as valuable experience to the individual and to the employer, as is service on a committee or division. But the perceived value of service on Council is not equal in a professional sense. Second observation is that the current economy has so affected all types of libraries

that financial support for travel and released time has disappeared from many institutions. Other libraries are operating with such reduced staffs that there is no one to fill in if a staff member is away for nearly a week, twice a year, in addition to vacations. The next nominating committee may face more people saying that running for ALA president, with its three-year obligation, is just impossible given the circumstances.

Opinion: Not necessarily shared by all the committee -- The practice of permitting two pathways to election to Council was intended to create a direct way to give those who have never served on Council a chance to be elected. But the dual path and the disparities of nominating committee practices may be creating the opposite impression. Any member can run for election via a petition with 25 signatures. Sitting Councilors who want to run for re-election pass the petition around during a Council session, secure the signatures, and are then eligible for the ballot. Other Council members are posting the petition to Facebook and getting the requisite signatures in minutes. The Committee for the 2012 election had 90 people on their ballot for Council rather than the required 50. The reality of a Council election is that a group of relatively unknown members are competing against a group (of unknown size) of better known members. The result of this is that a significant number of members are persuaded to run for office by the Nominating Committee will not be elected -- last year's election alone meant that an additional 40 people were disappointed in ALA. Why do we do this and expect that it will be easy for the next committee to find 50 people? If the Executive Board could lead the Association to adopt a policy that the Nominating Committee is the path to election and the number required for the ballot were enlarged to 75 - 80 people, the Committee would seek those candidates from a pool that includes sitting Councilors and would seek some balance along the continuum of service, from long serving Councilors to the new Councilors..

Some statistics about the Council candidates for the 2012 ballot:

22 are from academic libraries, 13 from public and 9 from school libraries. There are 2 LIS students running and two faculty from LIS institutions. The other candidates are from state libraries, special libraries and the vendor community.

Eight of the candidates are from Texas, 4 each from Illinois and New Jersey, and 3 each from California, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Closing We want to thank Maureen Sullivan for the privilege of serving on the Nominating Committee and JoAnne Kempf for her assistance and her patience. And we wish the Nominating Committee for the 2014 election all the best.

Respectfully,

Nancy Davenport, Chair

