

American Library Association
Spring 2010 Executive Board Meeting, Chicago, Illinois
Report of Roberta Stevens, President-elect

Committee Appointments

At the ALA Midwinter Meeting, I met with the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Appointments to review and finalize our work on the appointments to the Council and ALA committees respectively. There was only one change made to the listings as drafted.

Lois Ann Gregory-Wood contacted the members being appointed shortly after Midwinter and, in collaboration with Delores Yates, tracked the acceptances and declines. Surprisingly, there were only a few “no’s.” I expected that budget cuts, limits on travel, etc. would result in our dipping heavily into the alternate listing.

I drafted the letter (email) sent to members who did not receive a committee appointment, urging them to apply again when the process reopens in early August. I also asked them to let me know if they would like to work on one of my presidential initiatives. I got a great response!

Doing committee appointments is touted as a “bear of a job.” It involves a lot of research and organization, responses to a lot of interested (and sometimes very passionate) members and a lot of time spent in consulting with ALA’s elected officials and staff. However, the continued effort to bring new faces onto the committees will, I hope, widen both participation in ALA and support for the association and its activities. To wrap up this year’s committee effort, I will be sending separate email letters to the chairs, members and interns thanking them for agreeing to serve and laying out expectations regarding their responsibilities.

Finally, I must underscore the wonderful efforts of Lois Ann, Delores and my assistant Jeff DiScala. I also want to thank JoAnne Kempf and Lois Ann for the conference call that allowed Jeff and me to provide a raft of recommendations for making the process smoother for the next president-elect.

Nominations for the Committee on Committees and Planning and Budget Assembly

The Committees on Committees convened by email and then conference call to identify candidates for the Committee on Committees (COC) and the Planning and Budget Assembly (PBA) elections at the upcoming ALA Annual Conference. Thanks go again to Lois Ann for providing a color-coded Council listing of members eligible for the COC and PBA and for “arraying” the nominations received from me and the current COC. Her excellent preparatory work allowed us to review the candidates thoroughly and thoughtfully and to wrap up the selection in record time. Lois Ann is currently checking to see if the individuals we identified are willing to be candidates.

President-elect Website

My president-elect website was launched in early February. The site includes descriptions of the presidential initiatives, my schedule of appearances and key meetings, and a news and information page with links to video, presentations, etc. The Connect page links to my Flickr and Facebook sites and to my tweets and YouTube. With some urging from Jeff, I am getting better about sending twitter messages on a regular basis. The website address is: www.robortastevens.com.

Presidential Initiatives Advisory Committee

Once the Council and ALA committee work was out of the way, I was able to turn my attention to the presidential initiatives. My Advisory Committee and I met by phone and, using a grid prepared by JoAnne Kempf, confirmed the potential stakeholders for each initiative from ALA's divisions, roundtables and affiliates. We divided up the responsibility for reaching out to the relevant groups and obtaining the names of members they recommended for the three initiatives' planning teams. The objective is to get work underway on Frontline Fundraising, Our Authors, Our Advocates and the Why I Need My Library Contest before the Annual Conference in Washington. Moving the initiatives forward is my first priority. I am holding on appointing several task forces on other topics until after the inauguration.

Presidential Inauguration

The menu has been selected, the band lined up and the program developed. The latter is a surprise!

Speaking Opportunities

Bridging the Spectrum Symposium at the Catholic University of America

On January 29, I gave the keynote address at the Catholic University of America's "Bridging the Spectrum" Symposium. With the committee appointment experience fresh in my mind, I spoke about "Demystifying ALA," including the relationship between ALA and its parts ("big" ALA and "little" ALA), how to take advantage of the opportunities at conferences (and the help available for first-time attendees), the difference between Council and ALA committees, techniques for improving one's chances of getting a committee appointment, the Emerging Leaders program and my presidential initiatives.

James Madison Award at the National Freedom of Information Day Conference

When Camila Alire's brother was unexpectedly hospitalized, I stepped in to present the James Madison Award at the 12th annual National Freedom of Information Day Conference in the Newseum's Knight Conference Center. The joint winners were Meredith Fuchs, General Counsel to the National Security Archive, and the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics (CREW). Anne L. Weismann, CREW's chief counsel, accepted the award on their behalf. The award was given to Meredith and CREW in recognition of the agreement entered into by the National Security Archive, CREW, the White House and the National Archives and Records Administration to resolve the missing White House emails from the presidency of George Bush. The results of their successful lawsuit were an increase in the number of preserved White House emails, the restoration of missing emails from back-up tapes and a new email archiving system at the White House.

Kettering Foundation's National Issues Forum on Economic Security

On March 16, the day after presenting the James Madison Award, I joined a roundtable at the National Archives for a discussion on "Economic Security: How Can We Take Care of Our Future?" Sponsored by the Kettering Foundation, this was the kick-off discussion for the National Issues Forums on this topic. For me, it was an opportunity to share the important role that libraries play in providing financial and job information to their communities.

Libraries have hosted and even convened forums since the 1980s. Recently, ALA and the Kettering Foundation signed a research agreement to establish a Center for Public Life that will train librarians not only to convene, but also to moderate deliberative forums and to frame issues of local and national concern. I want to thank Nancy Kranich for ensuring that ALA had a "place at the table" for this discussion.

Learning, Libraries and Innovation Panel Discussion at Rutgers University

On March 31, I joined a panel for a joint program of the Rutgers University Libraries and its School of Communication and Information entitled "Learning, Libraries and Innovation: A Conversation." Karin Trainer, Princeton University Librarian, Dr. Ross Todd, Director for the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries at Rutgers, and I each addressed a series of questions from the vantage points of different types of libraries. Among the topics covered were what we can do to ensure our libraries value and reflect diversity in the workforce, how to articulate the relevance of libraries when Google and the Internet are challenging support for them and the critical contribution of libraries to developing information literacy skills.

SirsiDynix Webinar on "The State of America's Libraries, 2010" Report

On April 13, I was the guest speaker for the SirsiDynix webinar on "The State of America's Libraries, 2010" Report. This was my first webinar experience! I owe a debt of gratitude to Macey Morales for her patient collaboration with me on revamping the PowerPoint presentation and talking points. We spent a considerable amount of "quality time" together, but it paid off. The webinar's ratings were good.

I believe the PowerPoint's "Perfect Storm" and "Library Usage" slides tell the story "in a nutshell" ... a decade-long trend of increasing library use that has only accelerated while libraries have been simultaneously hit by budget decreases resulting in shorter hours and an inadequate number of staff.

Travel

I will be at the 41st Annual Mexican Library Association Conference (Jornadas Mexicanas de Biblioteconomia) in early May for a presentation on "21st Century Libraries: The Challenges and Opportunities."

Later in May, I will be the 2010 National Library Week guest speaker for the Bulgarian Library and Information Association.

In early June, I will attend the Canadian Library Association's conference in Edmonton, Alberta.