**EBD #12.21**

**2020-2021**

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** International Relations Report

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

Informational

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**

N/A

**CONTACT PERSON:**

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**DRAFT OF MOTION:**

N/A

**DATE:** January 15, 2021

**BACKGROUND:**

An update of ALA’s International Relation activities for the ALA Executive Board Midwinter Meeting 2021.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A

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**International Relations Report**

# Submitted by Michael Dowling-Director, International Relations Office

January 15, 2021

International Participation at Midwinter

As of January 15th, there were one hundred forty-eighty registrants from twenty-three countries outside the United States for Midwinter 2021. This accounts for around 2.5% of registrants. The registrant number is double what it was for Midwinter 2020. There are nine exhibitors from outside the U.S., all from Canada. This is half of the international exhibitors that participated in January 2020. There were exhibitors from eight countries at Midwinter 2020.

ALA International Membership

The global COVID pandemic and financial stress has impacted librarians around the world

ALA currently has 1,756 from 96 countries. Of these a little over half are from Canada. International membership has dropped around 9% from last year equal to the reduction in total ALA membership.

Sharjah International Library Conference/Forum

International Relations Office (IRO) worked with the Sharjah International Book Fair and other partner, the Combined Book Exhibit, to pivot in September from a planned full in-person conference to a virtual forum as COVID cases rose and travel restrictions were imposed. The [Sharjah Virtual International Library Forum](https://www.sibfala.com/) expanded the normal regional event to a global one with 956 registrants (830 librarians and 126 exhibitor staff) from 52 countries. Registration was free of charge this year. Over 550 participated live over the course of the three-day event November 10-12. Overdrive was the Gold Sponsor.

The switch to a virtual format allowed for an online exhibitor component with 118 exhibitors, many Arab language publishing companies. The exhibit listings were free for this pilot year of this enhanced feature.

ALA President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr keynoted the Forum with the address “Meeting the Challenge in Times of Crisis.” The Forum held in Zoom included simultaneous interpretation in English and Arabic.

The decision to hold the Sharjah Virtual Library Forum as a free event this year will result in reduction of ALA revenue by around $5,000 from budgeted, but increased the number of participants and connections and prospects for ALA.

ALA Task Force on United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s)

The ten-member task force chaired by Past President Loida Garcia Febo partnered with the National Library of the Philippines, The Philippine Librarian Association Inc. (PLAI) to present

***"Philippine Libraries and Their Roles in the United Nations SDGs"* on November 20. Over 800 attended.**

**The Task Force has added** [new resources](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/ala-task-force-united-nations-2030-sustainable-development-goals) **for all types of libraries to highlight their activities related to the UN SDG’s. A Word version of the chart originally created by the Los Angeles Public Library can be used by libraries to copy in their activities to any of the seventeen SDG’s for display and promotion.**

**The Task Force will be part of the next ALA Connect Live on February 25th focused on Sustainability. They will be joined by the Sustainability Round Table (SustainRT).**

ALA International Webinars

IRO worked in collaboration with the International Relations Round Table (IRRT) and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and hosted six international focused webinars in the fall. Some such as ALA-IFLA “Going from disaster to wonder - managing successful teams” and “International Work and Projects During COVID-19” provided knowledge and insight during these challenging times. “Reaching national impact in Kenya and Namibia: EIFL’s strategy for public library development” provided information on international activities. The total registration for these webinars was 728 with 479 attending the session in person while others watched the recording on-demand when convenient for their time zone.

IFLA Nominations

IRO and IRC have worked with multiple units across ALA to solicit and bring forward recommended members to the Executive Board to be nominated for IFLA Section Committees for 2021-2025.

IFLA Governance Proposed Changes

IRO Director Dowling has continued to serve on the IFLA Governing Board as it moves forward on its governance restructuring. The vote to modify IFLA’s governance will be on February 12.

ALA President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr is the voting representative for ALA.

The main changes are to create a smaller Governing Board (from 19 to 11), make the treasurer an elected position, and create additional Regional Committees across the globe beyond the three current divisions in Africa, Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) and Asia and Oceana.

A new Regional Council of the chairs of each region will be created with its chair serving on the IFLA Governing Board.

There would now be six regional committees, adding Europe, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and North America (just U.S. and Canada). The role of the committees will be to assist with connecting IFLA in the regions and assisting in IFLA’s advocacy and engagements such as the libraries and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In December, Dowling facilitated a discussion with IFLA headquarters staff and IFLA President-elect Barbara Lison with colleagues from other associations and institutions and individuals of IFLA on the proposed North America Regional Committee. The consensus from the discussion was for transparency, diversity, and inclusion and that there should be a certain number of slots (TBD) should set for each country to provide fair representation. But other than that, nominations should be open to all, such that ALA or the National Library of Archives and Canada would not have designated slots. ALA would create a call and review process for nominations from ALA.

Other International Connections

IRO Director presented on ALA’s COVID response efforts and initiatives at an Arab Federation for Libraries and Information (AFLI) Forum in September attended by eight hundred librarians and library workers.

Executive Director Tracie Hall keynoted the [CILIP Conference- Reimagined](https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/527177/Professional-associations-have-work-to-do.htm) on November 19 to the library community across the United Kingdom and its global audience.

ALA Executive Board Member Maria McCauley was part of a U.S. State Department program/presentation for the South African library community on “Librarians and the new normal” in December.