American Library Association
Organizational Effectiveness Discussion
2018 Midwinter Conference – Denver, CO

In the [November/December issue of American Libraries](#), ALA President Jim Neal called on members of the association to consider the 21st century effectiveness and agility of an organization whose constitution, bylaws, and policies date back over 140 years. President Neal suggested a review of ALA's organizational effectiveness with the goal of revitalizing the association.

> A process of review must incorporate the perspectives, interests, and contributions of a wide variety of stakeholders and affiliated groups. It must be mission-driven and embrace our core values. It must focus on member development and engagement, and on encompassing the complexity of voices that enrich ALA.   -Jim Neal, *American Libraries*, Nov. 1, 2017

The ALA Executive Board calls upon ALA Council, Committees, Round tables, Divisions, and the myriad of Communities of Practice inside and outside the association to consider what it would take to align ALA's organizational structure, policies, and rules with the Association's 21st century values, key action areas, and strategic directions.

The Executive Board is indebted to the excellent work of the Library Leadership and Management Association Division (LLAMA) whose recent re-organization helped create some guiding principles and templates for an ALA-wide effort.

ALA's Mission
"To provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all."

Guiding Principles of Our Work

1. We will build upon ALA's strengths
2. We will focus on ALA's Strategic Directions—Advocacy; Information Policy; Professional & Leadership Development; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
3. We will enable open, flexible, and easy member engagement
4. We will simplify and streamline process
5. We will ensure a governance and coordinating structure that enables members and staff to be effective, engaging in meaningful and productive work
6. We will empower member engagement
7. We will adopt a new mindset
8. We will optimize use of ALA staff time
9. We will experiment and try new approaches; we will learn from our experiences and be intentional about assessment
10. We hope to be a model of innovation for professional associations

Why Address ALA Governance, Bylaws, and Policies?

1. Members are confused by the structure and feel disconnected from the association.

2. New members are equally confused and intimidated by ALA's monolithic structure and practices that favor established, well-connected, and well-funded members. They don't see entry points for participation and question the value of membership.

3. ALA has suffered significant membership declines since the 2008 recession, falling 17% from 2008 numbers of 61,262 personal members to 50,570 personal members in December 2017 (these numbers do not include organizational and corporate memberships, which put the overall decline at 13%).

4. Employment in the library sector (defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics) declined by approximately 15% between 2007 and 2013 - a loss of 60,000 jobs, of which 20,000 were degreed librarians.

5. The structure has become overly complex:

   - 37 ALA and ALA Council Committees

   - 29 Round Tables and Member Interest Groups

   - 56 Chapters, 27 Affiliates, and 4 Related Groups

   - 11 Divisions with their own Committee, Section, Task Force, and Community of Practice structures

6. The ALA Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy Manual that govern our process and organizational procedures have not kept pace and are misaligned with ALA Core Values, Strategic Directions, and Key Action Areas.

ALA Council Discussion

For the purposes of discussion, Council members should consider three aspects of reorganization—**Goals**, **Specific Activities or Actions**, and **Expected Outcomes**. It's best if the actions and outcomes are aligned.
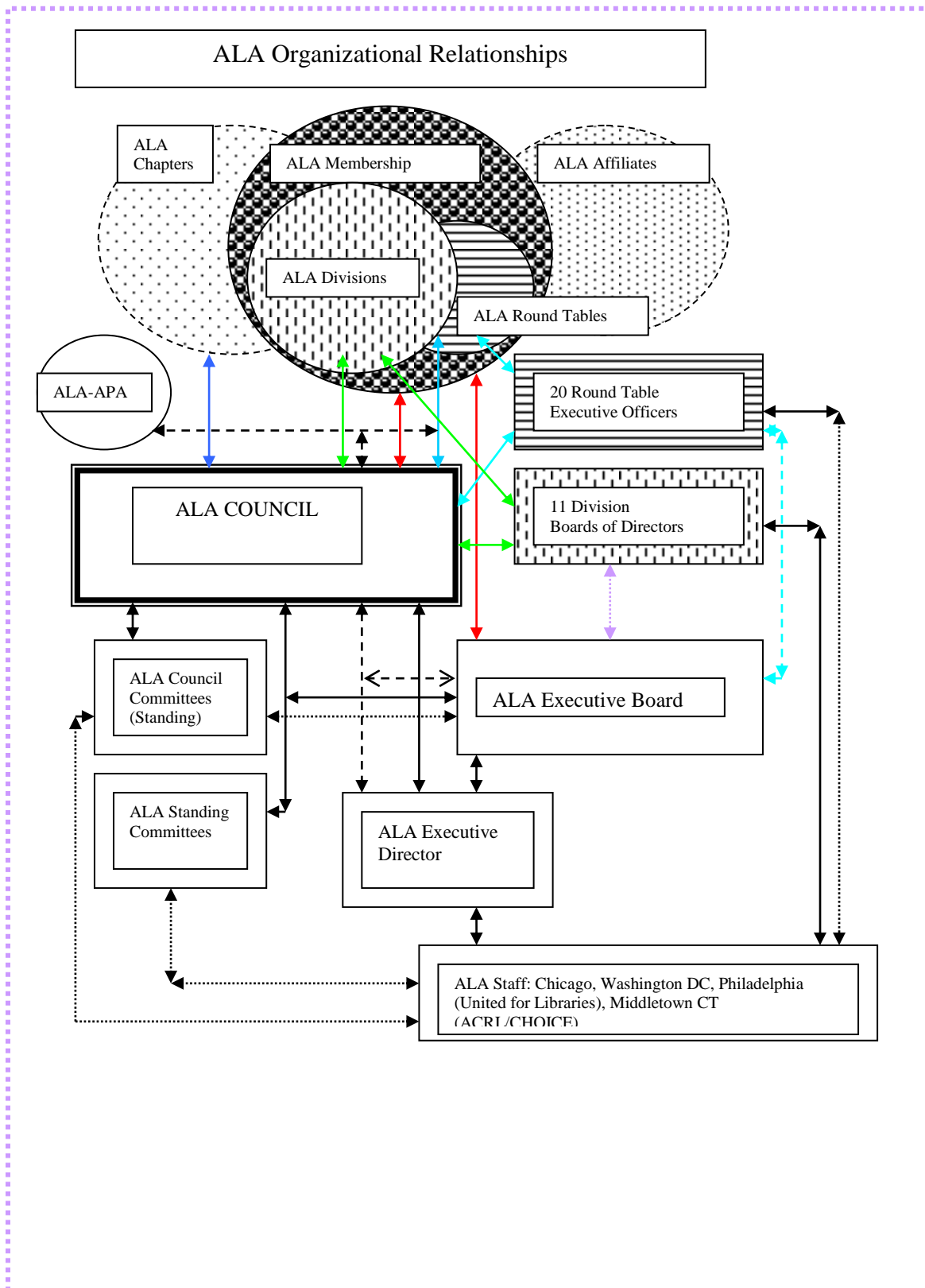
Discussion Questions

1. What does our ideal organization do?
2. What does our ideal organization look like?
3. What are 3 ways we can get there?

Using the above questions, fill in the blanks for your 3 ways we can attain our ideal organization:

"We will do _____, in order to _____, so that _____."

APPENDIX 1 - ALA Organizational Relationships

ALA Organizational Relationships

ALA Chapters

ALA Membership

ALA Affiliates

ALA Divisions

ALA Round Tables

ALA-APA

20 Round Table Executive Officers

ALA COUNCIL

11 Division Boards of Directors

ALA Council Committees (Standing)

ALA Executive Board

ALA Standing Committees

ALA Executive Director

ALA Staff: Chicago, Washington DC, Philadelphia (United for Libraries), Middletown CT (ACRL/CHOICE)

APPENDIX 2 - ALA and ALA Council Committees

ALA COMMITTEES
Accreditation
American Libraries Advisory
Appointments
Awards
Chapter Relations
Conference
Constitution & Bylaws
Diversity, Literacy, & Outreach Services Advisory
Election
Human Resources, Development & Recruitment Advisory
Information Technology Policy
Literacy
Membership
Membership Meetings
Nominating
Public & Cultural Programs Advisory
Research & Statistics
Rural, Native, & Tribal Libraries of All Kinds
Scholarship & Study Grants
Training, Orientation, & Leadership Development
Website Advisory

ALA COUNCIL COMMITTEES
BARC
Committee on Committees
Committee on Diversity
Committee on Education
Committee on Legislation
Committee on Library Advocacy
Committee on Organization
Committee on Professional Ethics
Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship
Council Orientation Committee
Intellectual Freedom Committee
International Relations Committee
Policy Monitoring Committee
Public Awareness Committee
Publishing Committee
Resolutions Committee

APPENDIX 3 - ALA Divisions, Round Tables, and Member Interest Groups

Divisions
American Association of School Librarians (AASL)
Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS)
Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)
Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)
Association of Specialized & Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA)
Library & Information Technology Association (LITA)
Library Leadership & Management Association (LLAMA)
Public Library Association (PLA)
Reference & User Services Association (RUSA)
United for Libraries (Trustees, Friends, Foundations)
Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)

Round Tables
Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT)
Exhibits Round Table (ERT)
Federal and Armed Forces Libraries Round Table (FAFLRT)
Games & Gaming Round Table (GAMERT)
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT)
Government Documents Round Table (GODORT)
Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT)
International Relations Round Table (IRRT)
Learning Round Table (LearnRT, formerly CLENERT)
Library History Round Table (LHRT)
Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT)
Library Research Round Table (LRRT)
Library Support Staff Interests Round Table (LSSIRT)
Map and Geospatial Information Round Table (MAGIRT)
New Members Round Table (NMRT)
Retired Members Round Table (RMRT)
Round Table Coordinating Assembly
Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)
Staff Organizations Round Table (SORT)
Sustainability Round Table (SustainRT)
Video Round Table (VRT)

Member Interest Groups (MIGs)
Diversity
Entrepreneurship and Maker Spaces
Graphic Novels & Comics in Libraries
Librarians Build Communities
Libraries Foster Community Engagement
Programming Librarian Interest Group (PLIG)
STEM in Libraries
Virtual Communities and Libraries

APPENDIX 4 - ALA Chapters, Affiliates, & Related Groups

ALA AFFILIATES

American Association of Law Libraries

American Indian Library Association

Association for Information Science and Technology

American Theological Library Association

Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA)

Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association

Association for Library and Information Science Education

Association for Rural and Small Libraries

Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

Association of Jewish Libraries

Association of Research Libraries

Beta Phi Mu

Black Caucus of ALA

Catholic Library Association

Chinese American Librarians Association

The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color

Latino Literacy Now

Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa

Medical Library Association

Music Library Association

National Storytelling Network

Online Audiovisual Catalogers

Patent and Trademark Resource Center Association

ProLiteracy Worldwide

REFORMA

Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials

Theatre Library Association

ALA RELATED GROUPS

ALA Allied Professional Association

Freedom to Read Foundation

Merritt Humanitarian Fund

Sister Libraries

ALA CHAPTERS

Alaska Library Association

Arizona Library Association

Arkansas Library Association

California Library Association

Colorado Association of Libraries

Connecticut Library Association

Delaware Library Association

District of Columbia Library Association

Florida Library Association

Guam Library Association

Georgia Library Association

Hawaii Library Association

Idaho Library Association

Illinois Library Association

Indiana Library Federation

Iowa Library Association

Kansas Library Association

Kentucky Library Association

Louisiana Library Association

Maine Library Association

Maryland Library Association

Massachusetts Library Association

Michigan Library Association

Minnesota Library Association

Mississippi Library Association

Missouri Library Association

Montana Library Association

Nebraska Library Association

Nevada Library Association

New Hampshire Library Association

New Jersey Library Association

New Mexico Library Association

New York Library Association

North Carolina Library Association

North Dakota Library Association

Ohio Library Council

Oklahoma Library Association

Oregon Library Association

Pennsylvania Library Association

Rhode Island Library Association

South Carolina Library Association

South Dakota Library Association

Tennessee Library Association

Texas Library Association

Utah Library Association

Vermont Library Association

Virgin Islands Library Association

Virginia Library Association

Washington Library Association

West Virginia Library Association

Wisconsin Library Association

Wyoming Library Association

Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA)

New England Library Association (NELA)

Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA)

Southeastern Library Association (SELA)

APPENDIX 5 - ALA Kitchen Table Conversations

ALA Kitchen Table Conversations: Narrative Summary – Midwinter 2017

Beginning at the Annual Conference 2013, ALA has held a series of kitchen-table style conversations, to increase our understanding of member and attendee aspirations for the "ALA community." Feedback from those conversations has been summarized in narrative form and shared back with members of the community. Each successive cycle of conversations has contributed to this shared or **public knowledge**.

People want a welcoming, inclusive, engaged, relevant and supportive organization. *But they're concerned* that ALA's complexity makes it difficult to navigate and that ALA needs to be more welcoming to new members and new ideas. *As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about* silos, having too many choices and too much "noise," and about bureaucracy. They say we need to concentrate on building relationships and on developing a sense of community; we need more focus; and we need to continue the conversations.

*They say members need flexible ways to participate meaningfully and that ALA should be a "safe place" to learn and grow. If we **worked on this together** – ALA leadership, Division leadership, Round Table leadership, and staff – **they would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward to help**. People are more likely to trust leaders who can work together collaboratively in stressful times. Overall, people believe we are stronger together and have more in common than we realize; but, at the same time, they want their differences heard and acknowledged.* (Fall 2014)

By June 2015, these themes were still important. Conversation participants noted that the kitchen table conversations are helping. Conversations notes indicate they know that ALA is listening and taking action, and change is beginning to happen. There was also acknowledgement that given the size and complexity of the ALA community, change will happen in different places and at different rates as community members work together. Sharing stories of progress and lessons learned will be essential to moving the whole community forward. People indicated that they have a sense of hope and recognize that their aspirations require big change – and big changes take some time.

In the June 2015 conversations in San Francisco and January 2016 in Boston, participants were asked to be very specific about ways that would help members connect and engage more simply. Several major themes or "findings" emerged. The following "Finding Statements" summarize each of those themes.

Finding Statement 1: People who have found their place in the ALA community frequently reference the importance of a mentor or experienced peer in their engagement process:
- Participants recognized that mentoring every member is not a feasible goal, but substantive connections with peers, welcoming them to the ALA community, are desired.
- People talk about the moment they found their community within the ALA membership and how energizing that is. Once they find their first community, they see opportunities to connect with other ALA groups. This metaphor suggests the importance of the pathways priority described above.
- The more membership opportunities are tailored to the member, the more welcoming the association feels. For targeted communications to happen, members are willing to provide additional personal communication.
- Greater transparency in the committee appointment process and access to committee work opportunities are desired.

Finding Statement 2: Members are also looking for more direct relationships with staff across the organization.

- There is a lack of understanding about what specific ALA staff do (aside from conference planning).
- Recognizable staff help give members a greater sense of access.
- ALA staff are accessible, easy to approach.

Finding Statement 3: Some members don't feel they are on the membership map in a meaningful way (e.g., paraprofessionals and library support staff, the unemployed and job seekers, consultants) and are searching for their pathways to participation.
- "We could use more round table dedication to support staff and more mentoring among non-librarians around ALA, career development within specific contexts, being respectful of career choices and why some people don't want to get an MLIS."
- Participants urged more attention to those in "less traditional job paths," including more inclusive language, inclusion on "drop-down" menus and wider participation pathways. These were also mentioned in relation to job seekers, free-lancers and support staff.
- Find ways to integrate chapter members; to bring them into ALA membership.

Finding Statement 4: People want to be more personally engaged but are unsure about how to make the connections between themselves, the organization, and the field.
- We need more stories about libraries having [community] conversations that made a difference; doing things differently – and the results (what changed).
- Reporting out on the Kitchen Table Conversations will help advance the change conversation.
- Specific outreach to library school faculty may help with perceptions of ALA and pathways to engagement for members.
- "Help us navigate." What are the priorities? What should we pay attention to across our various interest groups?
- Participants recognized there is a "lot of CE out there," but also believe that ALA "hasn't done a great job integrating it." It does not seem to them to be well coordinated. There doesn't appear to be a "CE plan." Participants wanted more structure, more depth and less "scattershot."
- Involvement in ALA should not be equated with serving on a committee. There should be multiple ways to contribute.
- There is interest in more venues for informal connection and social activities.
- Try pre-recorded welcome & orientation webcasts for new members to access – ALA and Divisions.
- Can we consider holding KTCs in an "open area" – e.g., the Uncommons – rather than a closed group – so people could "drop in"?

Finding Statement 5: People acknowledge the changes within ALA but they don't quite see a clear direction yet. They value the variety of perspectives. They see a need to balance institutional memory and future forward change.
- The feedback loop is critical.
- Many people are trying – but it sometimes seems like "throwing spit balls and seeing what sticks."
- "We need to hold together or we're all going to fall apart."
- "I like ALA because I like to stretch out and get perspective that I would never get in my tiny little bubble."
- We need to do a better job of reporting out about the conversations.
- A positive cultural change in ALA Council was noted -- "more respectful and mission aligned."

Finding Statement 6: When asked about sharing personal information "upfront" in order to get targeted information more quickly, responses are ambivalent.

- Privacy is a clear concern.
- "Fraught relationship with vendors."

Finding Statement 7: There is a strong consensus that a "simpler" ALA would be desirable – but not yet a clear consensus around what "simpler" would look like.
- Persistent use of acronyms is "off-putting."
- There is a lot of duplication and fragmentation.
- Various parts of the Association aren't familiar with what the other parts are doing.
- We need to think of the organization "like a Prezi presentation."
- "Integrate the organization of ALA into the information architecture of the website." Make it graphical if possible.
- All relevant information should be linked in one place.
- More standardization – including pricing.
- Make it easier to get involved.
- Create clear pathways to leadership.
- Provide a "snapshot" of ALA organization.
- Consider a password that isn't the membership number.
- There is a sense of not knowing "the rules" – of conference, of ALA.

In the Midwinter 2016 cycle of Kitchen Table conversations, participants were asked to be very specific about ways they believe ALA can be more "welcoming, inclusive, engaged, relevant and supportive." Some additional themes are "finding statements" emerged.

Finding Statement 8: Community building is a critical, ongoing activity.
- Members see in the ALA Community a way to "move the profession forward continuously."
- We should work more closely with graduate LIS programs, with a clear plan for communication and integrating students into the profession.
- The Kitchen Table Conversations are positive. They should be easier to stumble across.
- Acronyms are barriers to someone seeking to enter the community.
- We should consider doing "virtual" Kitchen Table Conversations – so more members can participate.
- Members of the ALA Community like feeling "a part of something bigger."
- Members want a "community of friends."
- "Members need to be stakeholders."
- "We need to hold together or we're all going to fall apart."

Finding Statement 9: There needs to be a pathway to participation and leadership for every member.
- There needs to be a clear process that is accessible to all members, "an even path for all members."
- ALA's organizational diversity is a strength – but also creates confusion.
- There is "too much duplication and fragmentation now."
- "I need a snapshot of how ALA is organized."
- We need to "go to" place for new members at conferences.
- It's too hard to find all the information you need to work within ALA. "Seems like everything is in different places."
- Leadership training is inconsistent.

Finding Statement 10: We need to balance face-to-face and virtual connection and community building.
- ALA needs to help employers see the value in supporting participation.
- Differences between groups make it hard to work.

- Sometimes when groups decide not to meet at conferences, people who had participated feel they lose connection. At the same time, people understand that many people aren't able to participate face-to-face, at least not consistently. Some bridging is desired.
- Hold a digital Activities Fair.
- There are still barriers to digital participation – inconsistent quality and content, different platforms, lots of "red tape," lack of coordination across units.
- The website should help members understand the organization.

At the 2017 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Atlanta, there will be four Kitchen Table Conversations. They will focus on a key aspect of inclusion: accessibility for people with physical, mobility, visual, auditory or cognitive disabilities. How do we create products, services and environments that are usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities, so that people with disabilities may participate fully in the life of the ALA community?

1-24-2015mg
5-3-2016mg
1-14-17mg

APPENDIX 6 - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ALA Constitution - http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/constitution

ALA Bylaws - http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/bylaws

ALA Policy Manual - http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual

ALA OrgChart

LLAMA Reorganization Information
- LLAMA 101 Presentation (LLAMA 101 Presentation.ppt)
- LLAMA Task Force – Guiding Principles (LLAMA - TF Guiding Principles.doc)
- LLAMA Town Hall Reorg Handout (LLAMA - MW17 Reorg Town Hall Handout.doc)