Ohio Library Council
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ITEM NO.: 5.F MEETING DATE: Nov. 18, 2022
SUBJECT: ALA Councilor Report SUBMITTED BY: Nick Tepe

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

ALA Governance
Work continues on the revision of the ALA constitution and bylaws ahead of a constitutional convention at LLX in January. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee has released the second draft of the new bylaws, incorporating comments from the first draft. Based on some of the committee’s annotations on this draft it sounds like there are still some councilors who would still like to see changes made to the framework that was adopted by council over the course of the past year, so I am expecting that there will be some lively debate in January. I continue to hope that the majority of council will continue to hold firm on the changes proposed by TAG and that we will be able to pass a new set of bylaws in January for member approval in the Spring elections.

We have also reviewed the initial draft of the revised operating agreement, which governs the relationship between the main ALA organization and the divisions. This work was originally proposed in 2020 to ensure financial stability for the organization while still honoring the independence of the divisions to govern their own finances, and at the annual conference this year Council approved the working group moving forward with revising the operating agreement. After reviewing this most recent draft however, the main feedback to the working group was that a lot of the operating agreement was going to be dependent on how the revision of the bylaws worked out in January. Because of this I do not think we’ll see the operating agreement revised until annual conference this year at the earliest.

Challenges and Adverse Legislation
Book challenges and legislation that would restrict access to information continues to be in the forefront of discussions within ALA. Probably the most significant in the last few months has been an administrative rule proposed in Missouri that would prevent libraries from using state funds “to purchase or acquire inappropriate materials in any form that appeal to the prurient interest of a minor,” and would also require libraries “to honor a parent’s decision as to what material their child has access to in the library. Parents would have the right to challenge a library’s age-appropriate designation for any material.” This is significant in that it is a statewide rule targeted at public libraries, as well as being virtually impossible for libraries to implement.

I had the opportunity to talk with Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, during the OLC Convention in Toledo to see what I could do to help the current situation. She is working to identify individuals in libraries across the country who are able to assist libraries facing challenges who are in need of help. I encourage any OLC members with an interest in intellectual freedom and the current rise in challenges to join the Intellectual Freedom Roundtable and keep their eyes open for opportunities to assist as these situations continue to develop.

5.F: ALA Councilor Report
ALA Presidential Candidates for 2024-25 Term
The American Library Association (ALA) Nominating Committee has selected two nominees to contend in the upcoming election for ALA president. The candidates vying for the 2024-25 term are Cindy Hohl, director of policy analysis and operational support at Kansas City Public Library (Missouri), and Eric D. Suess, director of Marshall Public Library (Idaho).

Hohl is past president of the American Indian Library Association and is an active member of other ALA affiliates, including the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, Black Caucus of ALA, Chinese American Librarians Association and REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. As a member of the Public Library Association, a division of ALA, she currently co-chairs the Membership Advisory Group, and was a member of the PLA Strategic Plan Review Team. Hohl is also a member of several round tables: Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT), Library Research Round Table (LRRT), and Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT). Hohl holds a Bachelor of Science in Organization Management and Leadership from Friends University, a Master of Library and Information Science from Wayne State University, and a Master of Business Administration from Baker University.

Suess is an active member of the Idaho Library Association, a chapter of ALA, where he previously chaired its Intellectual Freedom Committee. He was also a member of the ALA Council for more than 10 years and was involved in several council committees, including the Policy Monitoring Committee, Committee on Legislation and the Committee on Organization. He is currently a member of the following ALA divisions: Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Core, PLA and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). He also belongs to several round tables, including International Relations Round Table (IRRT), IFRT, Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table (GNCRT) and Games and Gaming Round Table (GAMERT). Suess holds a Bachelor of Arts in Government from the University of Notre Dame and a Master of Library and Information Studies from the University of Michigan.

Hohl and Suess will engage in a virtual candidates' forum on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, at 2:30 p.m. CDT. Each candidate will have the opportunity to share a statement and answer questions from members. ALA members can register for the forum here. Immediately following, ALA members will have the opportunity to virtually meet and greet each candidate.

Letter of Concern to FBI Regarding Threats of Violence in Libraries
During the Summer and Fall of 2022, threats directed to public and school libraries and library workers escalated, including the forced temporary closure of five public library systems due to bomb and shooting threats. It is important to note that none of these closures were in the state of Ohio. On Sept. 27, the executive board of the ALA transmitted a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray expressing concerns about the threats directed to public and school libraries and library workers. According to library directors and local officials, there is no evidence at this time showing a direct connection between recent threats and opposition to library materials and programs. However, the letter to Director Wray does underscore the increasing threats of violence to libraries and library workers nationwide. Read the full letter here.