

Idaho Library Association
ALA Chapter Councilor's Report, June 2006
Kay A. Flowers, Idaho State University

New Orleans was very glad to host the American Library Association's Annual Conference this year. ALA was the first large convention to visit the city since the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. As a result, almost every service employee, from cab drivers and bus boys to hotel managers, went out of their way to thank us for coming. Some librarians came a day early or stayed a day later to assist with cleanup projects sponsored by the Chapter Relations Office. In general, the city was well prepared to handle the convention, but the signs of Katrina were everywhere. In the downtown area, most areas were clean but many shops were still not open and the first two sections of the convention center were still under repair. Upon leaving the city, I noticed some of the RV cities that sprang up as well as a graveyard for flooded cars. The areas with the worst damage were not near downtown. All in all, though, it was a worthwhile conference.

There was some concern about ALA losing money on the convention. Attendance was down significantly (16k vs. 21k in Orlando), but ALA renegotiated prices so we might not lose money.

Naturally there were programs associated with being in New Orleans. I attended the presentation by Anderson Cooper who covered Hurricane Katrina for CNN. He told some of the personal stories of the aftermath.

Another interesting development was the release of the names of the "John Does" involved in the challenge to the gag order required by the USA Patriot Act. There were actually four people involved, and they gave a presentation on their experience.

Strategic Plan:

The new strategic plan, titled "Ahead to 2010", can now be funded by the dues increase that the membership adopted this spring. Because the dues increase is expected to depress membership renewals a bit, most of the increased funds will be delayed until the second and subsequent years of the plan, so the new activities are timed accordingly. The goal areas previously identified (Advocacy, Education, Public Policy and Standards, Building the Profession, Membership (i.e. value to members), and Organizational Excellence) are being fleshed out with Strategic Objectives and specific strategies, complete with assignments to specific ALA units. Most of the 1.2 million in additional funds will be directed to the new initiatives and technology improvements.

Finances:

ALA staff is working on a list of socially responsible firms for ALA to contract with for the purchase of goods and services; and it now includes 200 firms. ALA has retired the debts incurred in fighting the Children's Internet Protection Act and Communications Decency Act. There is still interest in a graduated dues structure, and another group was appointed to investigate the financial ramifications of such a plan and report back at

Midwinter 2007.

LC Series Authority Decision:

A packed forum heard reports about how libraries will cope with the Library of Congress's decision to relax some cataloging standards without consultation with anyone else. Councilor James Casey commented: "The cataloging community was seeking leadership following this immensely important change of tact by LC. Fortunately, such leadership was present and engaged." He credited Gary Strawn of Northwestern University Library with offering libraries an approach to address the issue. Strawn's report is available at <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/public/ALA/490Resolution.doc>

ALA Washington Office:

ALA's lobbyists identified some key issues (mostly addressed in resolutions mentioned below); examples are supporting HR 5439, the "Orphan Works Act of 2006" which will "better deal with the use of copyrighted works whose owners cannot be located with reasonable effort" and opposing S.2686, the "Broadcast Flag" resolution which strictly limits how broadcast material can be used and so could prevent information exchange in such vital initiatives such as distance learning and resource sharing.

Resolutions

As usual, most ALA business consisted of committee and task force reports with accompanying resolutions. The following is a list of resolutions that passed.

- Urging libraries to help educate the public about the genocide occurring in Darfur, Sudan.
- Opposing the so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" (TABOR) bills that have been adopted in Colorado and other states. [Colorado voters have since repealed it.]
- Urging Congress to direct the EPA to fund the EPA library network
- Supporting the Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006, which directs federal agencies to supply their documents to depository libraries
- Urging Congress to stop the destruction of Federal libraries and employ professional librarians to staff them
- Supporting online social networks as developers of information literacy skills (opposing DOPA)
- Affirming Network Neutrality (against big telecom proposals to create "fast lane" that would discriminate against everyone else)
- Supporting the E-rate discounts for libraries and schools
- Supporting the American Association of Law Libraries resolution on public access to the federal database PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records)
- Endorsing HR676, Single Payer Healthcare "Expanded Medicare for All" and S2772, "Health Partnership Act".
- Recommending standards for retention of library usage records and for protecting privacy
- Recommending collaboration among ALA units "toward a national conversation about privacy as an American value"

- Commending the "John Does" of the Library Connection for their resistance to a National Security Letter from the FBI.
- Adopting the "Resolution on Lessons Learned from Meeting in New Orleans" which commends librarians in the Gulf Coast area for their response to the disaster, calls on conference attendees to bear witness to the extent of the work that remains to be done there, asks librarians to continue to support "adopt a library" programs, and urges librarians to establish or strengthen their relationships with state and local emergency planning agencies to ensure that libraries are part of the preparation, response and recovery in future disasters.

APA

ALA's Allied Professional Association has decided not to change its official name, but referred to itself as "the organization for the advancement of library employees". This will be used for all contexts outside of legal ones. ALA-APA's certification efforts appear to be catching on, and 11 approved courses are being offered. APA is also promoting library staff members to join ALA in order to get discounts on APA services. Support staff certification is underway; the Western Council of State Libraries has developed a set of competencies that APA will consider using. APA is working on a new non-MLS salary survey, covering 69 job titles. Meanwhile, the librarians' salary survey continues. 4000 libraries have been surveyed, and the resulting analysis will be published. The *Library Worklife* electronic newsletter is available as a benefit of ALA institutional membership. APA's financial picture is improving; its expanded products are projected to bring in much more money in the coming year so that it can start paying back the money loaned by ALA. Councilors expressed concern with the lack of publicity for ALA-APA's work. Member contributions are still badly needed to keep it solvent. The ALA-APA Council supported its Committee on the Salary and Status of Library Workers' resolution on support for Freedom to Form Unions: Employee Free Choice Act, but defeated a second resolution supporting overtime pay protections.

Since ALA

Since the annual meeting, topics on the ALA Council list have included continuing discussion on the closure of the EPA Libraries. Nothing has been done to halt this process.

This was my last ALA Meeting as Idaho Chapter Councilor. I appreciate the opportunity to represent the Idaho Library Association, and I encourage the next chapter councilor in her endeavors.