**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** PLA Board Electronic Voting Protocol

**DATE:** March 6, 2019

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

Information

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**

Ramiro Salazar

**DRAFTS OF MOTIONS:**

**BACKGROUND**

Most PLA Board discussion, deliberation, and formal action takes place at quarterly in-person meetings of the Board. Occasionally, a time sensitive item requiring the Board’s attention will arise between meetings. In these cases, PLA will provide the board with background documents and: 1) schedule a conference call so the board can discuss the matter in real time and take a voice vote; or 2) contact the board via e-mail so that the Board can “discuss” and vote electronically. The former option is used when it is anticipated the matter needing action is complex, sensitive, or otherwise requires real time discussion. The latter option is used for more routine matters. The PLA President, in consultation with staff and other relevant advisors, determine which option to use. Any Board member has the option to suggest that a matter be discussed in real time. These practices align with ALA policy and bylaws (see relevant sections\* at conclusion of this document).

Board votes taken between meetings are appended to the minutes of the last in-person board meeting, which are approved at the next in-person meeting. Board actions are also tracked via a spreadsheet (attached).

The most recent electronic vote taken by the Board between meetings concerned the PLA Social Worker Task Force request to use PLA’s name in a letter they wrote related to the film “[The Public](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Public_(film))” and the ALA publication [The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness](https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/librarians-guide-homelessness-empathy-driven-approach-solving-problems-preventing-conflict). The PLA president and staff determined electronic discussion and vote were appropriate. On February 6, the PLA ED sent an email message to the board with the relevant background and informed the board that an electronic vote would be held the following week using SurveyMonkey. Subsequently, a majority of the board (8 of 10) voted via email (not using SurveyMonkey). A question arose as to the best way to conduct electronic votes.

Finally, the Board should be aware that the process for voting electronically remains in flux due to ALA’s switch to a new platform for ALA Connect. The prior ALA Connect platform included the option for confidential polling. It also allowed documents to be posted to the site, along with the poll. The new version of ALA Connect does not have the private polling feature. As a result, we have been using a mix of SurveyMonkey and simple e-mail polling of the Board. ALA has indicated that they are working to improve ALA Connect to allow for the kind of voting the PLA Board and many other groups within ALA need. PLA does not have a timeline for when that option will be available.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD ACTION**

The Board may want to discuss and recommend best practices related to electronic voting.

\*ALA Policy and Bylaws related to committees

[ALA Policy Manual, page 41](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/Section%20A%20New%20Policy%20Manual-1%20%28final%2011-17-2017%29%20with%20TOC%29_0.pdf)

A.5.5.2 Participation (Old Number 4.5.2) Members of all ALA and unit committees, task forces, and similar bodies are expected to participate in the work of the group. Participation includes both attendance at synchronous meetings scheduled in conjunction with the Midwinter Meeting or Annual Conference or at other times during the year, as well as contributions through asynchronous communication methods that may be utilized by the group outside of formal meetings. Attendance at meetings may be in person, or through other means that enable synchronous communication.

ALA Bylaws

[Article 8, Committees](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/bylaws#committees)

**Section 8**. Votes in the Executive Board, Council, committees, and task forces may be taken by mail, electronic system, or conference call, provided that all members are canvassed simultaneously.  A majority vote, provided a quorum has participated, shall be required for passage of any measure voted on by these means.  Each of these bodies shall have the authority to set a time limit within which the votes of its members shall be recorded, but if no such time limit is set, no vote shall be counted unless received within 30 days from the day the text of the matter voted upon was properly mailed or distributed to those entitled to vote on the matter involved.