Working Document
Exploration of Integration and Realignment Opportunities
for ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA

Background

For several months some of division and executive leadership within ALA have been discussing the challenges facing ALA as a whole and the divisions themselves. Like many professional associations, ALA membership and membership engagement through conference attendance have been dropping. Units are seeing differing economic impacts but it is enough to prompt leadership to reexamine many of the traditional assumptions, practices, and boundaries within the organization. The separations and complexities within the organization have also been a barrier to moving forward on IT issues, such as the necessary customization in rolling out the new iteration of ALA Connect. Therefore ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA leadership have been having focused discussions about the sustainability of the independent mid-sized, functional divisions. As part of these discussions, we have come to realize how much actual overlap in strategic mission, continuing education, and topical interest there is between our divisions, despite the different structural elements and the importance of member identities associated with being part of the division.

In some ways, the organizational structures and functional divisions that existed within libraries when ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA were formed have changed, with many of these changes in how we look at integrated technology and operational evolutions. We believe our three divisions should take a leadership role now in exploring how we can better serve our members with a focus on providing comprehensive support for careers that are evolving and changing over time. It's worthwhile for the organization to consider whether it needs to also evolve to better reflect this more integrated model. Whether this would be a model for increased collaboration between the divisions or something bigger involving shared/joint membership and structural realignments, or even a full merger to a new single division has not been decided.

This document is meant to provide a starting place for these discussions and is not a finished plan. At this point, we want to increase awareness of the concerns and open the discussions up for an informed engagement with the larger membership perspective of our divisions. This will mean exploring the risks and opportunities associated with different models. It also means asking questions, such as "If we could build a new combined division from scratch, what might it look like?"

A New Strategy

Rather than trying to fit existing programs into a typical ALA division structure, we wanted to start by putting the long-term success of our members – and potential members – at the center of our work, and then imagine what type of sustainable entity could best facilitate their success. That strategy means a much more targeted approach to understanding our members – what they need to do their jobs better, what they need to make their libraries better, and what they need to advance their careers. It also means advocating for equity, diversity, inclusion and access in all aspects of the professional environment.

Such a member-centered strategy would mean restructuring our current priorities, volunteer opportunities, and staff support roles. Rather than three small staffs duplicating efforts to be continuing education providers, marketers, social media managers, recruiters, and process facilitators, we would develop a new structure that shares resources to support identified areas as our core strengths:

- Standards – Creating an authoritative resource for best practices within the functional areas of the profession
  - Creation and input on national and international policies, standards, and competencies
- Operations and Buildings – Providing venues for sharing best practices supporting efficient unit operations and facilities
  - Sharing ideas and knowledge to stay engaged on changing trends in organizational structures, services, staff operations, and facilities
- Collections – Ensuring that libraries and library staff can meet user's needs
  - Creation and input on standards and best practices for selection, acquisition, description, access, and preservation of information resources
- Technology – Supporting the identification and adoption of best practices in libraries
  - Making ALA information policy concrete for members and the profession by providing resources, tools, training, and community support for adoption and implementation
  - Helping librarians to understand emerging technologies and translate them into actionable plans for library services
  - Bridging the technology related needs and discussions across all types of libraries and operational areas
- Leadership – Identify and develop leaders at every level
  - Ability to grow and lead within our governance structure, growing micro-opportunities and virtual engagement
  - Robust and diverse mentoring programs and leadership institutes
  - Growing and maintaining cohorts from leadership programs to expand member networks

Interrelated staff and volunteer roles would be focused on member success:
- Member engagement – building communities of mutual interests, proactive conversations, delivering value across multiple platforms, facilitating connection and formal/informal mentoring
- Member analytics – understanding needs and motivations, quantitative and qualitative research, building personas to differentiate and personalize member experiences within a framework that respects individual preferences for privacy
- Member career development – continuing education across a range of library functions/settings, building an easily accessible ecosystem based on competencies, personalized recommendations based on analytics
- Association operations – instilling a culture of member-centricity, excellence in governance/volunteer engagement, measurement and reporting that aligns with strategies; space for rapid innovation, i.e., launch, learn, course correct, repeat.

Next Steps
As noted, this initial document is a strategic level summary of our discussions. If there is interest in further exploring the concept, we would need to begin work on several fronts. First and foremost is member communication and engagement to identify supportive ideas and concerns that would need to be addressed.

- Sharing information through a variety of venues
- Asking the right questions to support or deny assumptions of core strengths and member needs
- Developing appropriate and accurate responses to create a shared understanding and build buy in

Then we would create ad hoc interdivisional working groups or task forces charged to develop proposals for addressing the operational details for a closer realignment of the divisions. These might include areas, such as:

- Creating shared mission/vision statements accompanied by new bylaws/governance documents
- Redefining future committees/member group structures
- Addressing collaborative finance/budgetary issues
- Seeking efficiencies in staff support operations based on skill sets and resources
- Communicating plans and processing member input/feedback
- Developing rollout and integration timelines and procedural planning documents
- Engaging within ALA with Executive Committee, Council, and other divisions on ideas and strategic and political frameworks

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