

**TO:** LITA Board of Directors

**TOPIC:** Executive Director's Report

**ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT:** Report

**SUBMITTED BY:** Jenny Levine, Executive Director

**DATE:** January 21, 2020

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This report covers LITA activity for July – December 2019.

## OVERVIEW

- Mark Beatty retired on August 31, 2019, and [we welcomed Chrishelle Thomas](#) on September 3, 2019, in the new position of Membership and Marketing Manager.
- We ended November with 2,100 members, up slightly from 2,093 the previous month but down from 2,393 one year ago.
- As of November 2019, our member retention rate was 70 percent. This is an association metric but it's new for us to start tracking it.
- Budget as of November 30: -\$24,046 (it was projected to be -\$12,589)
- We published 89 jobs to the [LITA Jobs Site](#), [lita-l](#), and the LITA Blog. This is 14 fewer ads than was posted at this time last year.
- [LITA Blog](#) posts: 61, compared to 69 at this time last year
- We sent 14 email blasts (and did accompanying LITA Blog posts), including\*:
  - 7 related to online education offerings (not counting evaluations)
  - 3 member newsletters, which are now on a regular monthly schedule
  - 2 calls for proposals
- [ITAL](#) issues published: 2

\* Now that Chrishelle is sending monthly newsletters, we're including in them information that used to go out in single email blasts to reduce the number of emails we send to members. We plan to monitor opens, clicks, and unsubscribes to evaluate if this approach works better than single-topic messages.

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## 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAMS

*Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Member Engagement, Professional Development*

Former staff member Mark Beatty again led an initiative to use short evaluations printed on heavy business card-size paper to try to improve the number of responses. This worked well for the second year in a row, and we received quite a few cards back. Mark entered the information from

the cards in a Google Sheet along with other information so that we can analyze everything from the effect of room location to time of day.

### **Sessions**

- [19 programs](#) (we normally present 20, but one was canceled by the presenters)
  - Including [Agency, Consent, and Power in Science Fiction and Fantasy](#), presented by our Imagineering Interest Group and [Executive Perspectives: A Conversation on the Future of the Library Technology Industry](#)
- [President's Program with Meredith Broussard](#)
- [LITA Top Technology Trends panel](#)

### **Preconferences**

- AvramCamp = 30 registrants; thanks to our sponsor, OCLC, we were able to sponsor 5 scholarships to attend
- Metadata Management Tools = 47 registrants
- Beginning Git and GitHub = 21 registrants

## **2020 EMERGING LEADERS**

*Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Professional Development*

We're excited to introduce our 2020 Emerging Leaders, [Kelsey Flynn](#) and [Paige Walker](#).

Kelsey works in the Adult Services departments at two public libraries in the southwest suburbs of Chicago: the White Oak Library District and the Joliet Library. She is a vocal advocate for library technology that can help patrons with visual disabilities.

Paige works as the Digital Collections & Preservation Librarian at Boston College, where she is chair the Born-Digital Archives Working Group and co-chair the Privacy Working Group. She is drawn to network and information security as they pertain to digital preservation, as well as our obligation as library workers to protect the privacy of our community.

We also proposed a team project called *Inventing a Sustainable Division*, which was accepted. The goal is to take the values stated in ALA's recent resolution on sustainability and develop them into practical, actionable steps for LITA (or Core) to take. The final product will be a report that includes the factual findings of the group, their recommendations, and a plan for communication and transition. The six Emerging Leaders who will be working on this project include Kelsey, Paige, Kristen Cooper, Tonya Ferrell, Laura Mendez, and Tonya Ryals.

## **2020 LITA FORUM**

*Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Professional Development*

When the first iteration of the Core Steering Committee began its work in 2018, we decided not to hold a Forum in 2019 while we waited for the outcome of the vote. This decision allowed us to restore the full planning period for the 2020 Forum, which we'd had trouble doing the past few years due to issues with locations.

The Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore, MD, was selected as the location for the next Forum on November 19-21, 2020, and a contract was signed in September. This allowed the Planning Committee enough lead time to begin contacting sponsors and opening the call for proposals in January 2020. This year's chair is Berika Williams, and she has been doing an incredible job managing this complex project.

This Forum will be a joint effort between LITA, ALCTS, and LLAMA to show what collaboration could look like if the members approve the proposal to create Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures as a new division. As a result, members of ALCTS and LLAMA are also part of the Planning Committee.

Chrishelle created a "save the date" announcement that was sent to members of all three divisions in December, and we hope to open registration in March. She also worked with ALA Production Services on a promotional postcard we'll be handing out at Midwinter.

The Web Coordinating Committee did a great job archiving the 2018 Forum site and implementing the [new 2020 one](#).

I also want to note that we implemented closed captioning for some of the Forum Planning Committee meetings in response to a member request. This is the first time we'd received a request for this, and we're now better prepared for when this happens in the future.

## **ALA CONFERENCES**

### *Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Professional Development*

The Board's decision to end committee and interest group meetings at ALA Midwinter Meetings greatly reduced the amount of work required by staff to prepare for and run events there. It also saved us \$2,000 on catering for the traditional Monday morning Town Hall (a figure that was already decreasing due to declining registration for Midwinter). For 2020, LITA will be holding only Board meetings, Top Technology Trends, joint interest group meetings with ALCTS, and a combined ALCTS/LITA/LLAMA Social (in place of our usual Happy Hour). [View all of our sessions in the Scheduler](#).

The Membership Development Committee's work helped finalize the location for the joint ALCTS/LITA/LLAMA Social at Midwinter, while the Top Technology Trends Committee came up with another great lineup. The LITA Committee Recognizing Excellence in Children's and Young Adult Science Fiction will be announcing its 2020 [SF Notable Lists](#) at the conference.

I also want to note a special program we're presenting this year as part of the News You Can Use series at Midwinter. Based on work she led with the LITA Assessment and Research Committee and input from the LITA Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Laura Costello will be discussing [Library Technology Jobs: Trends and Inclusivity in Hiring](#). Based on analysis of past postings to the LITA Jobs Site, this session will focus on new and emerging trends in skills library technology employers are looking for and the types of positions that are currently in demand. Aimed at technology

librarians in the job market and employers looking to post and hire new positions in library technology, this program will also include a focus on trends in diversity and inclusion in job postings and best practices for writing job ads that attract a diverse and talented candidate pool. This session will be recorded and made available publicly 6-8 weeks after Midwinter.

The Program Planning Committee has selected 20 programs for the [2020 Annual Conference](#) (with committee and IG meetings still to be submitted). We're running the 4<sup>th</sup> iteration of AvramCamp and are inviting ALCTS and LLAMA members to join the planning group. I'm currently working on securing presenters for two additional preconferences.

### **BYSTANDER TRAINING**

*Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Professional Development*

After the 2019 ALA Midwinter Meeting, the LITA Board issued [a statement promising to provide free, online bystander training for LITA members](#). I first contacted potential organizations to do the training but found this option was cost prohibitive. After further discussion with the Board, I contracted with [Frame Shift Consulting](#) to do two days of online, train-the-trainer bystander training for a select group of LITA, ALSC, and PLA members. The training took place on November 6 and 7, 2019, and we are now working on a schedule to provide free, online webinars about allyship/bystander training for LITA members starting this spring.

### **FUNDRAISING**

*Meets our strategic goal for Organizational Stability and Sustainability,*

Led by Past President Bohyun Kim, the Fundraising Committee started to pick up traction in November and December. Thank you to Committee member Pauline Stacchini for updating her 2018 fundraising infographic for use in this year's campaign.

We projected raising \$2,000 for all of FY20, but we beat this goal and raised \$2,075 by the end of December alone thanks to our annual fundraising campaign. This was due in part to a last-minute anonymous donor who matched donations up to \$1,000. This money will go towards future AvramCamp and Emerging Leader sponsorships. This year Chrishelle took over coordinating our Giving Tuesday and annual campaign efforts, which resulted in more engaging messaging.

### **GOVERNANCE/ADMINISTRATION**

*Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development*

I met regularly (often twice a month) with President Emily Morton-Owens to keep her informed of issues and plan LITA activities and discussions. This was especially important during the past year when so much of my time was spent on activities for the new division proposal and planning for the vote.

I created introductory documentation for the LITA Parliamentarian and Financial Advisory Committee Chair as Board members. This type of information had not been collected and organized in the past. I also updated the [Virtual Engagement Toolkit](#), which had not been revised since its 2017 launch. Next I plan to add a section for chairs about how to work in ALA Connect.

I analyzed our year-end FY19 budget and posted the [budget spreadsheets and a narrative](#) in the [LITA Public Documents folders in LITA Connect](#). I also posted [first quarter numbers and commentary for FY20](#).

The Board held virtual meetings in [July](#), [October](#), and [December](#). The agenda, discussion documents, and recordings are available in LITA Connect. The Board also held an informal discussion in January to give each Board member a chance to review and ask any questions about the final Core Proposal before the vote at Midwinter.

Note that because the Core Steering Committee decided to put the question of the new division on the spring ballot, there is no election slate for LITA officers as there usually is at this time of year.

I also spent time helping ALA IT troubleshoot problems with the Workspace module in ALA Connect so that the Board could begin using it for voting between meetings, which we started doing successfully in September.

## **IMPROVING EFFICIENCY**

*Meets our strategic goal for Organizational Stability and Sustainability*

The Web Coordinating Committee is finalizing its work to redesign the interface for [our docs.lita.org site](#) to make information easier to find and improve navigation overall.

Working with PLA and United staff, I helped ALA select Airtable as its project management tool. I have LITA set up so that Chrishelle and I can track our work, and I'm helping ALCTS and LLAMA implement their tasks in the software in the hope that we will begin working together as Core staff in September. Going forward, it will be much easier to write reports like this one and provide real-time status updates on projects. A big thank you to both Steven Hofmann in PLA and Beth Nawalinski in United for providing inspiration and replicable work I could use to build LITA's base.

This past fall ALA IT implemented Microsoft Teams for all units that requested it. I took the lead for ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA to create teams and chats for each unit, as well as Core to allow us to work together on our joint projects more effectively.

While discussing future workloads should Core be approved, I learned about the process Kerry Ward had to go through each year to manage the application process for the ALA Leadership Institute. It required a lot of unnecessary manual work and didn't provide an optimal user experience for applicants or reviewers. I worked with Kerry to define the process and [move it into a combination of WordPress and Google Sheets using Zapier](#). This work was done on our docs.lita.org site at the last minute, so next year it will be migrated to a separate WordPress installation specifically for the Leadership Institute.

## **LITA BLOG**

*Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Member Engagement, Professional Development*

We're excited to announce that [Jessica Gilbert Redman](#) is our new LITA Blog Editor. Jessica is the

Online Resources & Services Librarian at the University of North Dakota's School of Medicine and Health Sciences Library. She completed a post-graduate certificate in user experience and always seeks to ensure that end users are able to easily find the information they need to complete their research. Watch for calls from her in the coming weeks for regular and guest contributors for the [LITA Blog](#).

Thank you to Cinthya Ippoliti and John Klima for serving as LITA Blog Co-Editors for the past two years. Additional thank yous to Cinthya (past Education Committee Chair), Joel Tonyan (past Communications and Marketing Chair), and Robert Wilson (past Membership Development Committee Chair) for running the search for this position and recommending Jessica's appointment.

### **LITA JOBS SITE SERVICE**

*Meets our strategic goals for Professional Development*

We published 89 jobs to the LITA Jobs Site, [lita-l](#), the LITA Blog, and on social media, . This is a total of 14 fewer ads than was posted at this time last year.

In July ALA informed us that it would not provide a credit card payment gateway for our jobs site. As a result, we'll have to continue taking credit cards manually and having accounting staff run the numbers manually. However, I have begun work on revising the jobs site interface in order to automate the job postings on our end. It's unfortunate that ALA Accounting will continue to spend time manually processing credit card payments, but we plan to launch the new version of our site that posts listings in real-time this spring.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND MARKETING**

*Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability,* Chrishelle notes that in November 2018, LITA membership was down by 11 members. According to the FY20 Quarter 1 report, LITA membership increased by 7 members in November 2019 with 19 new members, 11 renewals, and 9 reinstates. Focusing on enhanced member engagement, providing cutting edge online education and in-person conference programming, recruiting and retaining student membership, and strengthening the voice of the library technology community are key components for continuing the upward trend.

Now that Chrishelle is on board, we'll be focusing more on member retention, an area we haven't had capacity to address in the past. We were also finally able to activate our New Member Interest Group in ALA Connect, and she has begun posting regular content there to increase engagement. New members are automatically added to this group for the first two years of their membership. In addition, we finally created a [New Member FAQ](#), thanks to the help of the Membership Development Committee.

ALA (and therefore LITA) uses Informz to send marketing and membership emails. Unfortunately, ALA has not completed the necessary work to allow us to implement automated campaigns, so instead Chrishelle redesigned our one-off join, renew, reinstate, and lapsed member messages. She

also did some work to update our template to enhance branding and implemented monthly newsletters for regular communication with members.

While we adjusted to new routines and processes, the content on the LITA home page on the ALA website become sorely out-of-date. Chrishelle worked with the Web Coordinating Committee to update it and will track content there in the future so this doesn't happen again.

She has also spent considerable time creating a communications data dashboard of social media and email statistics to measure engagement. Among other metrics, she'll begin tracking which platforms are working well for us, where we can make improvements, which messages do best in each channel, and when. As the new staff liaison to the Communications and Marketing Committee, she's been working closely with them to coordinate our future efforts.

## **ONLINE LEARNING**

*Meets our strategic goals for Professional Development*

Starting in July 2019, we've held five webinars but no courses:

- [Universal Parity to Resources: Rethinking Library Access](#) presented by Christine Elliott and Courtney McAllister on July 25, 2019
- [Guiding Students through Digital Citizenship](#) presented by Casey Davis on October 16, 2019
- [In-house vs. Outsourced Digitization: similarities, key differences and pitfalls to avoid](#) presented by Marina Georgieva on October 29, 2019
- [Taking Altmetrics to the Next Level in Your Library's Systems and Services](#) presented by Lily Troia on November 5, 2019
- [You Can Keynote](#) presented by Dorothea Salo on November 14, 2019

I'm very excited that [Kira Litvin](#) has started her term as our first ever eLearning Coordinator to handle scheduling, practice sessions, gathering materials for marketing, providing support, and tracking statistics for our webinars and courses. Since Mark's retirement at the end of August, I've been handling all of these tasks, so I'm now working with Kira to train her. She will be working four hours each week to provide a more robust and consistent experience for both our presenters and participants.

Thank you to Cinthya Ippoliti (past Education Committee Chair), Joel Tonyan (past Communications and Marketing Chair), and Robert Wilson (past Membership Development Committee Chair) for running the search for this position and recommending Kira's appointment.

Since we didn't run any courses in the first half of FY20, course revenue is below projections and showing a deficit of -\$7,800 as of the end of November. Webinar revenue is also down by 72% for a deficit of -\$8,602.

Recognizing these problems were happening and their impact on the budget, we appointed the new eLearning Coordinator, worked with ALA's eLearning Solutions unit to market our sessions to a larger audience, and increased our work with the LITA Education Acquisitions Editor to curate



more sessions and topics. I went through past member and attendee surveys to provide topic ideas, and Chrishelle worked with the Education Committee to open a new [call for proposals](#). I also solicited ideas from the LITA Board and our LITA Leaders group of chairs and representatives and passed them on to our Acquisitions Editor. Our goal is to double the number of sessions we offer starting this spring to make up the deficit.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

*Meets our strategic goals for Professional Development*

To date, we've published 21 books with Rowman and Littlefield and have 2 more in production, with 11 more titles under contract. Chrishelle has been very active working with Rowman to promote new titles, including a special 35% discount promotion on LITA Guides at the end of 2019.

Our latest titles are:

- [Change Management for Library Technologists](#) by Courtney McAllister
- [Casting Light on the Dark Web: A Guide for Safe Exploration](#) by Matthew Beckstrom and Brady Lundy

One of the two past Neal-Schuman titles we updated with ALA Editions was published in early 2019. There were some communication issues with ALA Editions, but we're now getting updated marketing materials and sales figures for both titles.

- [New Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: A LITA Guide](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) edited by Kenneth J. Varnum
- [Marketing with Social Media: A LITA Guide](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Beth C. Thomsett-Scott (publishing date March 2020)

At the request of the ITAL Editorial Board and ITAL Editor Ken Varnum, I've been working with [HathiTrust](#) to make issues of both [Information Technology and Libraries](#) (ITAL) and the [Journal of Library Automation](#) (JOLA) in their collection available without any restrictions on access. The work on ITAL is complete, but I'm still talking with HathiTrust to complete the work on JOLA.

## **STAFFING**

*Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development*

Mark Beatty did indeed retire at the end of August, and in September we hired [Chrishelle Thomas](#) in a redesigned role as LITA's Membership and Marketing Manager. Previously Chrishelle worked at C200, a nonprofit that connects women from the highest levels of successful public and private companies, where she was the Member Services and Programs Administrator. Before that, she was with the American Bar Association for over a decade, serving as their Membership & Events Coordinator and then as their Membership & Marketing Specialist.

Chrishelle immediately jumped in to the deep end and grabbed hold of this new role to improve member engagement and our marketing materials with her expertise, trademark "can do" spirit,



and good humor. We work well together and I appreciate her ideas, creativity, and level of commitment. Although I've had to take on some of the work Mark previously did, I've been able to turn over many initiatives and roles to Chrishelle, and she has run with them.

## **WORKING GROUP SUPPORT**

*Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Professional Development*

Chrishelle took the initiative to work with Committee Coordinator Kelly Sattler to organize quarterly cross-committee meeting with Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Communications and Marketing, Education, Forum Planning, Membership Development, Program Planning, Publications, and Top Technology Trends to develop a flow of content between the events/publications. The intent is that if someone gives an amazing webinar for LITA (Education Committee), perhaps it could be turned into an article for ITAL (publication). An article for ITAL could become a session at Forum. Someone on Top Tech Trends could be encouraged to write for the blog, write a book for a LITA series, or expand a topic into a webinar, etc. The result of the meeting is a content pipeline for the Committee Chairs to share ideas and reference for education/programming calls for proposals.

I implemented an automated solution for allowing committee and interest groups chairs to [schedule the LITA Zoom Meeting Room](#) through LibCal software (thank you to Springshare for providing us with a free license!). Our model is based on ACRL's use of the software, but we automated each step to remove staff time as a barrier to booking the room. Looking to the future here, too, I also set up LibCal reservation systems for ALCTS and LLAMA.

## **WORKING WITH ALA**

*Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development*

During this time, I attended 2 division director meetings, 4 unit manager meetings, and 21 internal meetings on everything from standardizing pricing on webinars and courses across the divisions to ALA-wide efforts to coordinate membership marketing. I also attended 3 all-ALA staff meetings to meet the 3 candidates for ALA Executive Director. I'm excited to begin working with Tracie Hall, who will start in the position on February 24<sup>th</sup>.

In July, ALA contracted with a vendor to implement security training for all ALA staff. Both Mark and I participated in this training, and Chrishelle completed it during her new hire orientation. In December I also participated in training for ALA's new bill payment software.

I've been a vocal advocate for improving the user and admin experience, as well as the security, of the election voting system ALA uses and as a result, I was drafted into period meetings with the vendor to work on both of these issues. Pushing the vendor to make changes has greatly reduced the amount of work ALA staff have to do to create ballots and will result in the use of ALA's Shibboleth login system for voting members (thereby getting rid of an additional login members had to remember). The company's email confirmation messages to candidates who submit biographical information still look like phishing scams, so I continue to advocate for customized messages that include ALA branding and text.

ALA has been working behind-the-scenes to prepare for the move to a new space on Michigan Avenue now that the Huron Street buildings have been sold. Kerry Ward, ALCTS/LLAMA Executive Director, and I met with ALA HR to make sure space for both LITA and the potential Core staff are set up appropriately in adjacent spaces. Our move date is now Monday, April 27, 2020. I will be spending quite a bit of time before then going through all of our file cabinets to prepare for the move.

### **Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures**

*Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development*

As part of our work to create a new division with ALCTS and LLAMA, I have participated in biweekly Steering Committee meetings and been the staff liaison to the Core Communication Team.

In addition to attending these meetings, my work for the Steering Committee included creating a Sympa mailing list for communication, implementing a WordPress site at [core.ala.org](http://core.ala.org) and updating it, setting up Zoom webinar rooms and registration for 4 online town halls, and liaising with ALA Production Services to create the logo. I also presented the fourth town hall with Julie Reese (ALCTS Deputy Director) and Kerry Ward and wrote parts of the final [Core Proposal](#).

My work with the Core Communications Team involved sending 5 email blasts to members of all 3 divisions and tracking participation and engagement metrics for each one. I also worked with the group to finalize a design for a postcard that will be sent to members of all 3 divisions via postal mail in February to make sure they are aware of the spring vote. I'm now working with ALA Reproduction Services to set up the mailing.

As part of my work with other staff to prepare for Core, I initiated biweekly meetings of ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA staff and have been posting regularly in Microsoft Teams to encourage discussion and team building there. I also ran two surveys to help us plan staffing and infrastructure should the members approve the new division.

The first survey asked staff about their own strengths and weaknesses, their workstyle preferences, what professional learning they would like to pursue, where they want to fit within the new structure, where we could help them become more efficient through automation, what we should continue doing from their current division, and what we should stop doing. I then met with each staff member to discuss their answers and provide context for what we're planning on the staff side.

The second survey asked about knowledge of various productivity tips and tools. I've been using the results to present tips and tools at our staff meetings to help others become more efficient.

Chrishelle is handling marketing to LITA members for the joint [Virtual Exchange](#), (May 4, 6, & 8, 2020), which ALCTS has taken the lead on running. Conversely, ALCTS and LLAMA staff will take the lead on marketing the joint Forum to their members, with LITA handling the management and onsite logistics for the Forum.

I am very proud of the work done by the Core Steering Committee, Core Communication Team, and ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA staffs to get to this point. The proposal is a strong one and ensures that each of our areas remains relevant in the profession and within ALA, with an increased focus on advocacy, member engagement, and professional development. Approving it means we will get to do more with more instead of less with less, which will eventually lead to our dissolution. I encourage members to vote yes on the spring ballot.