TO: LITA Board of Directors

TOPIC: Executive Director's Report

ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT: REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: Jenny Levine, LITA Executive Director

DATE: August 24, 2020

This report covers LITA activity for January – August 2020, although most traditional statistics and metrics are unknown at this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I've included the most current figures we have at this time.

OVERVIEW
- We ended February with 2,040 members, down from 2,052 the previous month and 2,306 in February 2019. Track LITA's Membership Statistics here.
- Budget as of February 29: -$-1,522 (projected to be -$44,330 at this time of year). Track LITA's Budget History here.
- Committee support: LITA staff member Chrishelle Thomas attended 41 meetings to support the work of LITA committees, and I attended 37 meetings. View the LITA Calendar.
- I published 57 jobs to the LITA Jobs Site, lita-l, the LITA Blog, and on social media. This budget line will be down considerably due to the impact of COVID-19 on the job market.
- LITA Blog posts: 58; the site was redesigned in April.
- Between the two of us, Chrishelle and I sent 11 email blasts (and did accompanying LITA Blog posts), including 4 member newsletters. Chrishelle also worked with ALA eLearning Solutions to send 12 email blasts promoting LITA webinars and courses.
- ITAL articles published: 22
- #LITAchats held on Twitter: 6
- The LITA Board met 4 times, 2 of which were official meetings and 2 of which were unofficial discussions. I also met with 2019-20 LITA President Emily Morton-Owens 11 times and 2020 LITA President Evviva Weinraub Lajoie twice.
- I attended 59 ALA meetings, including Unit Manager and All-Staff Meetings

CORE SUPPORT
- I attended 43 planning meetings for Core, including regular meetings with the Core Steering Committee, Core Transition Committee, and Core Committees Working Group. Core staff met more than 45 times to coordinate work and begin building infrastructure after the April affirmative vote.

- Chrishelle attended 3 meetings of the Member Engagement Working Group and one with the Communications Working Group.
- Chrishelle and I sent 10 email updates to ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA members (plus anyone who had signed up to receive them), created the Core email template in Informz, and posted updates on social media.
- I posted 6 updates on the Core site, and created new pages, forms, and graphics as needed.
- I provided support for 3 focus groups and the LITA Town Hall. Chrishelle provided support for the second Twitter chat in February.
- I created a Core team base and tables in Airtable for Core staff where they can manage their own tasks and coordinate planning for the launch of the new division on September 1,

2020 LITA EMERGING LEADERS PROJECT
Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Member Engagement, Professional Development

Pictured: Kristen Cooper (sponsored by the Minnesota Library Association), Tonya Ferrell (sponsored by the Nebraska Library Association), Kelsey Flynn (sponsored by LITA), Laura Mendez (sponsored by the San Diego County Library), and Paige Walker (sponsored by LITA)

LITA sponsored two Emerging Leaders this year: [Kelsey Flynn](), Adult Services Specialist at White Oak Library, and [Paige Walker](), Digital Collections & Preservation Librarian at Boston College. Kelsey and Paige are part of Emerging Leaders Group G, "Inventing a Sustainable Division," a LITA project to identify measures LITA (and now Core) can take to improve fiscal and environmental sustainability. The team researched the organization and sustainability plans of the top fifteen trade organizations in the United States, surveyed LITA membership, and developed [a set of recommendations and best practices for both financial and environmental sustainability]().

Thank you to 2020 Emerging Leaders Team G for their tremendous work on this project. The Core Board will review their report during its first year to discuss implementation of the recommendations. We also want to thank Margaret Heller for being the LITA mentor for the group, advising them, and cheering them on.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAMS

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

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ALA replaced the 2020 Annual Conference with a virtual event. This format meant a reduction in the number of programs presented, so only 2 LITA programs were on the schedule. Our flagship Top Technology Trends panel was a popular session on the first day, while Cyber Hygiene Prescreening covered an important topic on the second day.

Chrishelle and I reached out to accepted presenters to discuss turning their programs into courses, webinars, or a free series of case studies. Since ALA didn't run any virtual preconferences, AvramCamp has been moved to a pre-Forum event in November. The Imagineering Interest Group's author panel has also been moved to the 2020 Forum.

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS
Meets our strategic goals for Professional Development

This year's recipients are:

- Dr. Jian Qin – *Frederick G. Kilgour Award for Research in Library and Information Technology (OCLC)*
- Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries – *Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award (ACRL/ALCTS/LITA/LLAMA)*
- Samantha Grabus – *LITA/Ex Libris Student Writing Award*
- Alison Macrina – *LITA/Library Hi Tech Award for Outstanding Communication for Continuing Education in Library and Information Science*
- Hebrah Emara – *LITA/OCLC Spectrum Scholarship in Library and Information Technology*
- Michael Carroll – *LITA/Christian (Chris) Larew Memorial Scholarship in Library and Information Technology*
- At the 2020 Midwinter Meeting in January, the LITA Committee Recognizing Excellence in Children's and Young Adult Science Fiction issued its third Notables List. These annotated lists, published annually, are designed to assist children, their parents, and librarians in selecting books that use (future) science and technology rather than fantasy or magic. The selections focus on three age groups: picture books, middle grade books, and young adult books.

Working with the chair of each award committee, I set up the timeline, monitored progress, and requested checks for the winners. This year Chrishelle took over handling the news releases and online promotions for winners. She also provided logistical and marketing support for the LITA Committee Recognizing Excellence in Children's and Young Adult Science Fiction.

While we anticipate continuing most of our awards and scholarships as part of Core, this is the last time we'll give out the *LITA/Ex Libris Student Writing Award* and *LITA/Library Hi Tech Award*. We

thank Ex Libris and Emerald Publishing for their past support of these awards, both of which end with the 2020 recipients.

CORE: LEADERSHIP, INFRASTRUCTURE, FUTURES
Meets our strategic goals for Advocacy and Information Policy, Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development

I spent quite a bit of time during this period helping plan the spring election question about Core and then implementation of the new division for September 1, 2020. I coordinated the Communications Working Group's postcard mailing that went to all ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA members in February to make sure they knew about the election. I took the inventory of all ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA committees and turned it into a Google Sheet with pivot tables for each transition working group to use to centralize the data and work. I was the staff liaison for the Committees Working Group and provided advice to other transition groups.

On the staff side, I worked with Julie Reese (ALCTS Deputy Director) and Kerry Ward (ALCTS Interim Executive Director, LLAMA Executive Director) to begin building a culture and infrastructure for Core staff. I created new position descriptions for myself, the new Advocacy and EDI Program Officer (Brooke Morris-Chott), and Marketing and Membership Manager (I'm so glad I get to keep working closely with Chrishelle in this role). These three positions will make up the Advocacy, Connections, and Engagement (ACE) team within Core.

I set up Airtable to manage this project and trained staff how to use it. I also created a Google Form and Sheet for soliciting volunteers to help with transition working groups. I'm the Core staff liaison to ALA IT, working with them to set up everything from our new website and ALA Connect site to new domain names and codes in ALA's member database.

Chrishelle has been creating new graphics for Core, setting up Core's social media accounts, helped layout the Core website, creating copy for webpages, working behind the scenes on Core Virtual Forum, creating email campaigns for Core members, managing LITA's Continuing Education functions, coordinated Top Tech Trends at Annual and Core's 1st virtual happy hour, managed the LITA blog, created monthly newsletters, worked with Committee Chairs to help enhance the LITA's CE pipeline, regularly updated LITA's website, trained Core staff on CE workflows, and facilitated webinars and courses,

FORUM
Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Professional Development

We were in good shape for the November 2020 Forum thanks to an early selection of Baltimore (MD) as the location. However, by April it was apparent that COVID-19 was going to force us to take the Forum virtual. We quickly adjusted our plans, and Forum Planning Committee Chair Berika Williams did an amazing job leading the pivot. The Core Virtual Forum will now take place on Wednesday, November 18, and Friday, November 20, 2020.

As part of this change, I worked with the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel to amend the 2020 contract to move the in-person event to October 6-9, 2021.

GOVERNANCE/ADMINISTRATION
Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development

I met regularly with President Emily Morton-Owens to keep her informed of issues and plan LITA activities and discussions. We communicated via email when we couldn't meet synchronously.

I drafted the FY21 budget, which showed that LITA would need to wind down operations that year if the Core vote did not pass. Luckily members approved the creation of Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures, so technology will still have a home in ALA. We ran this single question on the spring ALA ballot, so the Nominating Committee did not submit candidates this year. The Appointments Committee also didn't meet to appoint vice-chairs for the coming year since LITA committees will end when Core begins.

In December, the LITA Board voted that only authors who were not under an embargo could participate in the annual Imagineering Interest Group's author panel at the ALA Annual Conference. At the Board's direction, I reached out to our Tor representative to advocate that Macmillan remove the embargo it had imposed on new ebooks. Macmillan ended the embargo in March, which will allow us to continue working on this program with them.

ONLINE LEARNING
Meets our strategic goals for Professional Development

Since Midwinter, we've run 8 webinars (2 of them free to help library workers deal with the pandemic) and 2 courses. Our eLearning Coordinator helped us run the first four webinars, but Chrishelle stepped in when this member volunteer had to resign. Chrishelle did an amazing job of running the next four webinars plus two courses, in addition to still handling all of the marketing, setup, and communication with presenters and participants.

- Engaging with Algorithm Bias: How Librarians Can Meet Information Literacy Needs of Computer Science and Engineering Students (webinar)
- How to Talk About Library UX - Redux (webinar)
- A Crash Course in Protecting Library Data While Working from Home (free webinar)
- Digital Inception: Building a digital scholarship/humanities curriculum as a subject librarian (webinar)
- Using Images from the Internet in a Webpage: How to Find and Cite (webinar)
- How to Analyze and Negotiate Library IT Contracts (webinar)
- Troublesome Technology Trends: Bridging the Learning Divide (webinar)
- Bibliometrics for Librarians (course)
- Library Tech Staff Response to Covid-19 (free webinar)

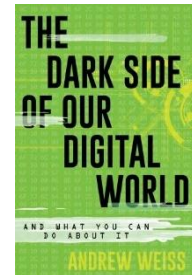- Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality and the Academic Library (course)

PUBLICATIONS
Meets our strategic goals for Professional Development

To date, we've published 23 books with Rowman & Littlefield and have two more in production.

Our latest titles:

- [Makerspace and Collaborative Technologies](#) edited by Beth Thomsett-Scott
- [The Dark Side of Our Digital World and What You Can Do about It](#) by Andrew Weiss
- [Creating Accessible Online Instruction Using Universal Design Principles](#) by Brady Lund
- [Change the World Using Social Media](#) by Paul Signorelli

We also published [Marketing with Social Media, Second Edition](#) by Beth Thomsett-Scott with ALA Neal-Schuman.

Our [*Information Technology and Libraries*](#) journal published [March](#) and [June](#) issues covering such leading edge topics as [Virtual Reality as a Tool for Student Orientation in Distance Education Programs](#), [LibraryVPN: A New Tool for Protecting Patron Privacy](#), and [Using Augmented and Virtual Reality in Information Literacy Instruction to Reduce Library Anxiety in Nontraditional and International Students](#).

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

I want to note Chrishelle's upcoming one-year anniversary with LITA because this has been a difficult year for a long list of reasons, but LITA got through it as well as we did because of her hard work and dedication. Her position will continue with Core, and we're very glad to have her on the team.

WORKING WITH ALA
Meets our strategic goals for Member Engagement, Organizational Stability and Sustainability, Professional Development

New ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall implemented a series of charrettes designed to bring new configurations of staff together to brainstorm and discuss different aspects of ALA. In late March I participated in the first of these, a small think tank group that worked on scenario planning for ALA's short-term future. We worked together very quickly and submitted our report on April 1st. In

July I was also part of a charrette on Staff Synergy and Alignment that explored possibilities for greater collaboration and efficiency across the organization.

Tracie has also implemented regular staff meetings, and this has led to more internal discussions about ALA's financial situation and work environment during the pandemic. These are natural, and sometimes difficult, discussions, and I was part of a small group of staff who volunteered to work on designing some structure for these conversations. We submitted a plan with several recommendations at the beginning of August.

After watching multiple ALA units send out surveys about library responses to the pandemic, I helped coordinate a joint approach led by PLA. Other participants included ACRL, the Public Policy and Advocacy Office (formerly known as the Washington Office), and the Public Programs Office. The survey went live in May and results were released in June.

After implementing Airtable for project management in LITA in 2019 and Core in early 2020, I advocated for using it at the ALA level to automate tasks and optimize processes. Although ALA's financial situation precludes it from purchasing licenses for most staff, I built a form for all ALA staff to use to note when they would be in the ALA office during the pandemic, which ultimately helped with contact tracing. I also created a submission form for all staff to use when submitting courses, small events, and webinars to be entered in ALA's registration system.

THE FUTURE

This month marks my 5-year anniversary as Executive Director of LITA. It's been a challenging time, but it's also been one of the most rewarding of my career. Three years ago, we decided to begin discussions with ALCTS and LLAMA, not knowing what the future held. Looking back, it was clearly the right decision, and I'm proud that we took the risk.

While I'm sad that LITA won't exist on its own anymore, I'm energized that we're becoming part of something bigger that can expand its influence and impact within ALA and the profession. As libraries have changed over the last 50 years, so must LITA. I'm excited to help lead that change.

I've had the good fortune to work with amazing people in LITA. I've learned so much from each and every one of them, and together they embody the ethos of "trusting the group." I know that sounds like a cliché, but the people in LITA have been a true inspiration. LITA members illustrated how much we can achieve together, and that is the spirit and motivation I will carry forward into Core.