**To: ALA Councilors**

**From: Betty Turock**

**Date: June 21, 2021**

**Dear Colleagues,**

**I am compelled at this moment in the reorganization of ALA to submit my response to the FTRWG Resolutions Overview\_Final. It will begin by looking back so we can move forward together, then address the concerns with which I am left, and make some suggestions for their amelioration.**

**Looking back to move forward together**

**Over the years ALA leaders have struggled to enact changes that resulted in a member driven organization with democratization as its primary goal**.

**Prior to that time the prevailing mode of operation was that committee memberships were tightly controlled. Positions of leadership were centralized in a small core of decision makers and occupational segregation was the order of the day with over 80 percent of one gender comprising the workforce, but power and position seldom accorded that majority.**

**This was the case not only within the field of librarianship, but also within ALA. As reorganization is before us, it is essential that we remain mindful of the democratic principles that were established for ALA to grow and develop successfully. As more changes were introduced distributive decision making superseded hierarchical and centralized power. Top-down approaches were supplanted with representative input. The structure and governance of ALA came to reflect slow but significant progress in democratization**.

**A member driven organization with meaningful broadscale involvement made leadership available to more than a powerful few and opportunity for leadership at the highest levels replaced the previous power structure. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion became the key strategic direction for accomplishing Social Justice within our Association.**

**Any reorganization should retain these directions.**

**Realignment of priorities: The fiscal future of ALA**

In 2021 the tangible assets of ALA have diminished as have its three traditional revenue streams: membership, publishing, and conferences. Because the current financial exigencies of our Association were recognized as an existential threat to its continued viability, a **Forward Together Fiscal Analysis Working Group** was established. Simultaneously an **Operating Agreement Working Group** was created to review decisions reached over 30 years ago that deal directly with the financial relationship between ALA and its Divisions, Round Tables, and other units. **Each of the two new groups were tasked with producing a report directed at generating recommendations or resolutions for the future.**

**Yet neither the reports nor recommendations/resolutions are part of the record created around reorganization and, even more important, they do not inform the current restructuring recommendations/resolutions. ALA’s future must not only be sustainable over time but must also result in an improved bottom line.**

**Regardless of the outcome of reorganization, the work assigned to the Fiscal Analysis Working Group and the** **Operating Agreement** **Working Group must continue** as the Association’s first priority if ALA is to maintain its viability. This may be an impossible task for a volunteer group with high level, demanding positions. If so, we must hire a consulting company specializing in financial analyses for the improvement of nonprofit associations with pressing financial problems.

**Without data the reorganization will be initiated based on unvalidated suppositions. Time is short. Let’s get on with it!**

**Resolutions regarding the composition of ALA’s Board of Directors**

**1. What basic operational framework is the FTRWG recommending and why?**

This debate is ongoing among many ALA members. **The only place where it has not resulted in lively discussion about the controversial changes proposed for the Board and the Council is the place that needs it most: in the FTRWG sessions.** **This has stagnated the progress of FTRWG. They must encourage an unbiased and open debate now.**

**2.**  **Affiliates are confusing. They must be more clearly differentiated—which are eligible for Board membership, and which are not?** Great variability exists among these groups. The American Theological Library Association, the Patent Office, and the Black Caucus are all Affiliates. Currently members of Affiliates do not have to be ALA members, and some have less membership than the smallest Roundtables**. More attention to this issue is needed so that it is presented in a way that makes its outcomes understandable.**

**3. Why is the inclusion of the nonvoting staff member on the Board of Directors left vague?**

**We gained a knowledgeable, compassionate Executive Director with a brilliant mind when Tracie Hall chose to join us. As in the past the Executive Director should be named to a nonvoting position on the Board. This is common organizational practice that should be continued in ALA.**

**4. Eradication of redundancies**

**The Board of Directors, Council, and Assemblies present a complex and confusing structure in which duplication creates unnecessary redundancy, particularly in the realm of policy making. Little detail is provided on the Assemblies. Identifying overlaps in the three structures is a necessity. What powers and duties are assigned to each of the three, where do redundancies reside, and what will be done to meet the intent of the reorganization to streamline ALA?**

**Resolutions regarding the composition of Council**

**1. FTRWG proposed alternate compositions for Council**

**Like Pat Schuman I prefer the alternate option (discussed by the FTRWG but not included in its report) with its larger more representative Council and perceive the current primary proposal as shifting the power of one arm of governance from the many to the few. Councilors, not ALA, pay for their own attendance at Conference, which, I believe, a complete and reliable ALA Fiscal Analysis would make obvious. By contrast members of the Board of Directors (the Executive Board) have a preponderance of their expenses paid for by ALA. An explanation is essential for how these expenses will be taken care of in the future. In my opinion the alternate option more clearly indicates that the democratization of ALA remains a fundamental Association value.**

**2. Chapter Councilors**

**My greatest concern in the redistribution of Chapter memberships is in the smaller rendering of Chapter Councilors. The Chapters, poorly named, are in actuality the representatives of the state library associations that provide ALA with a national network. Chapters are the key points for the dissemination of ALA action focused, for example, on newly developed programs, services, and libraries’ place in federal legislation. Chapters’ statewide advocacy campaigns support ALA’s innovative ideas for libraries and librarianship. They should remain indispensable connections that thread ALA together for action from coast to coast.**

**3. Membership of representatives from Spectrum on Council**

**To be transparent, I had the honor of proposing, with Elizabeth Martinez, the Spectrum Scholarship Program. Then I developed it further and raised most of the funding, so my comments have a bias that I won’t deny. But my question is for clarification of the annual election**. **Will three members be elected in the first year with differing terms and then revert to one member elected annually or will we wait for three years to accomplish this objective?**

**We are barraged from myriad sources with the wisdom of more than casual attention to history as a cornerstone for broad scale organizational change. Its absence in the future focused representation of ALA’s reorganization is surprising. Many of the questions that remain arise for a lack of attention to the Constitution and organizational culture of ALA.**

**That needs remediation before action moves forward.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Betty J. Turock, Ph.D.**

**Past President and Honorary Member**

**American Library Association  
Professor and Dean Emerita  
Rutgers University  
School of Communication and Information**

**343 North Fourth Avenue  
Highland Park, New Jersey 08904**

**+1 732-742-6579 (cell)  
+1 732-377-7139 (fax)**