

TO: Core Board of Directors

TOPIC: January 2024 Core Membership Report

ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT: Report

ACTION REQUESTED BY: Jenny Levine, Director of Advocacy, Connections, & Engagement

SUBMITTED: January 22, 2024

SUMMARY

Membership statistics in this report are through November 30, as these are the most current statistics we have from ALA.

Overall, we ended FY23 with 4,257 members, which is a decline of approximately -5.7% from FY22. This was half the year-over-year loss between FY21 to FY22, so we continued trending in the right direction. For November 2023, year-over-year loss was -4.36%, which is now in line with what other divisions experience throughout the year (excluding AASL, ACRL, and PLA conference years).

We also saw additional positive trends in the data. In July 2023, we added one member instead of losing members for the first time. This happened again in September, when we added 40 members, which is likely related to Forum registration. Unfortunately, October and November totals returned to a decline. Most concerning is that we experienced our first, albeit slight, year-over-year increase in loss of members since August 2022.

	FY24	# Lost Month to Month	% Lost Month to Month	# Lost FY22-FY23	% Lost FY22-FY23
September	4297	40	0.94%	-196	-4.36%
October	4268	-29	-0.65%	-179	-4.03%
November	4251	-17	-0.38%	-194	-4.36%

Source: [Core Membership Statistics](#)

As we enter our fourth year, we're starting to see some patterns. For example, December and January are the only months every year in which we've seen an increase in the number of joins, with the January numbers always being the highest of the fiscal year.

January is also the month we've consistently seen the highest number of renewals each year, far outpacing all other months. This isn't surprising since so many ALA members are on a January through December membership period.

When we adjust the number of dropped members to remove the 5-month grace period, we see the fewest number of drops has occurred in July each of the past two years.

For four of our sections, total membership continued to increase every single month, with the Leadership & Management Section set to break the 2,000-member mark in December. Unfortunately, we saw a slight decline in the total number of members in two sections for the first time since we began collecting section statistics in May 2022.

Although the Metadata & Collections Section lost two members in November, it still grew 22% from the previous year to 1,773 members. While the Technology Section lost 10 members in November, it still grew 30% from the previous year to 1,451 members.

Increase in Growth from November FY22

- Access & Equity = 105.1%
- Buildings & Operations = 57.8%
- Leadership & Management = 32.8%
- Metadata & Collections = 21.9%
- Preservation = year-over-year numbers are not yet available
- Technology = 29.7%

View the full spreadsheet of [Membership Statistics](#) for more granular numbers dating back to September 2020.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT JULY FY23 – JANUARY FY24

The big news during this period was the official launch of our new [Preservation Section](#) in September! In just three months, it has grown to 133 members. See the Section Updates below for more about their first months.



Due to a lack of volunteers at the section leadership level, we dissolved the Assessment Section at the end of August. Our focus on this topic is now through a new [Assessment and Evaluation Committee](#) at the division level, which is working on a member survey to determine where it should direct its efforts. This group will also take over maintaining the Library Assessment Repository once it's migrated to the [Core LibGuides site](#).

We also dissolved three interest groups due to lack of chairs and activity: Newspaper, Open Access, and Solo Practitioners.

Division Committee Updates

- The [Awards and Scholarships Coordination Committee](#) is working on a handbook for committee functions. A new project team will soon begin work to migrate the Frederick G. Kilgour Award for Research in Library and Information Technology to a grant to fund research.
- Applications opened for the IIDA Library Interior Design Awards, Career LIFT Award, Larew Memorial Scholarship, Margaret Mann Citation, and PR Xchange Awards. Promotion will happen throughout February.
- The [Committee Recognizing Excellence in Children’s and Young Adult Science Fiction](#) announced the [2024 Excellence in Children’s and Young Adult Science Fiction Notable Lists](#) on January 22 during LibLearnX.
- The [Federated Authentication Committee](#) is creating both a community of practice and a central repository for reference and training materials. The group also collaborated with Marshall Breeding to add two new questions about authentication to his annual Library Automation Perceptions Survey. The results will inform the Committee’s future projects.
- The [Interest Group Coordination Committee](#) held an IG Chairs Town Hall in October and began planning for [Interest Group Week](#) in March. This spring will be the first time the IGCC implements a review process for one-third of our IGs. The group is working a rubric for the evaluations.
- The [Leadership Development & Mentoring Committee](#) began its second cohort in our mentoring program.
- The [Library Materials Pric Index \(LMPI\) Editorial Board](#) submitted updates for [2021](#) and [2022](#). The documents were uploaded to the ALA Institutional Repository in October. The group will be working on the 2023 update.
- The [Membership Engagement Coordination Committee](#) planned, and will run, the Core Volunteer Fair on January 26. Working with the Core Presidents, the group also hosted committee chair orientations in July.
- The [Web Committee](#) implemented the [Library Consultants Directory](#) based on work done by the [Library Consulting Interest Group](#). A subgroup is working on creating procedures for [our LibGuides site](#) to open it for use to all Core groups.

Section Updates

Access & Equity

- The [Leadership Team](#) is working on a program for the 2024 ALA Annual Conference.
- They are also defining leadership and liaison roles to other Core groups to streamline communication and collaboration. They plan to include this in a new section handbook that should be completed by the end of June.

Buildings & Operations

- The [Library Interiors, Furnishings, and Equipment Committee](#) is creating a glossary of terms and questions that would help librarians working on or starting interior and furnishing projects.
- In December, the [Security in Libraries Committee](#) moved from the Leadership & Management Section to B&O.

Leadership & Management

- The [Leadership Team](#) submitted the [L&M Section Handbook](#).
- Two new committees were implemented: [Management Best Practices](#) and [Project Management](#).
- In October, the Team surveyed section members about which types of content and opportunities they would most value. They're now evaluating the feedback.

Metadata & Collections

- The Section launched a major revision to the 2017 Competencies for Cataloging & Metadata Professional Librarians. [The new document was added to the ALA Institutional Repository](#).
- The [Leadership Team](#) submitted the [M&C Section Handbook](#) (PDF).
- The [Continuing Resources Holdings Information Committee](#) is discussing becoming an interest group.
- [The Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries Committee became an interest group](#).
- The Leadership Team created the [World Languages Acquisitions Committee](#) to update and maintain the [Foreign Book Dealers Directory](#).

Preservation Section

- The new [Section Leadership Team](#) handled its first round of appointments, began work on its handbook, and started planning a town hall for members & quarterly check-ins with its chairs.
- The Section started with three interest groups and two committees. Discussion is underway to add a Digital Preservation Interest Group and a Library Binding IG. We're very excited to see this section grow and expand the great work its groups have been doing.
- The [Preservation Outreach Committee](#) has selected and confirmed [Traci Sorell](#) as the 2024 Honorary Chair for [Preservation Week](#) (April 28 – May 4). This year's theme is "Preserving Identities." The Committee is also working on scheduling two free webinars for PW and the project for Preservation in Action at the 2024 ALA Annual Conference. I'm working with the group on migrating the previous site's "Dear Donia" answers to an "Ask an Expert" service before April.

Technology Section

- The [Leadership Team](#) submitted its [Section Handbook](#).
- The Team has put out a call for chairs to establish a new Data & Analytics Interest Group. They are also implementing a new Artificial Intelligence Project Team to study how AI can be implemented within Core and what types of training we should provide. They met with the co-

chairs of the [AI and Machine Learning in Libraries IG](#) to gather ideas for the project team's charge.

- The Team hosted a free webinar about AI in July (see below).

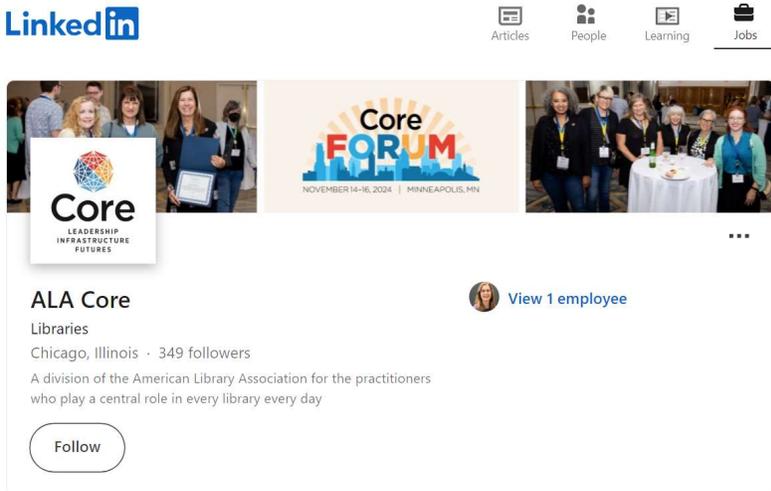
Community Events

During the past seven months, several Core groups held successful online events that resulted in 3,254 registrations and 1,846 unique participants who attended the live sessions. We've been able to increase the audience for our CE announcements mailing list based on these registrations. In the future, we plan to send member recruitment messages to the non-members attending our free events.

- *AI and Machine Learning: Transforming the Modern Campus and Library*, hosted by the Technology Section, July 21 = 464 registrants, 272 live attendees
- *Developing ALA-LC Romanization Tables Alongside New Technologies for Improved Discovery: Case Study ADLaM*, hosted by the Committee on Cataloging: Asian and African Materials, August 23 = 338 registrants, 222 live attendees
- *New Perspectives on the Preservation of Children's Books*, hosted by the Book and Paper Interest Group, September 12 = 97 registrants, 58 live attendees
- *Project Management Interest Group Brown Bag*, September 12 = 92 registrants, 39 live attendees
- *5 for 5 with Core's Library Consulting Interest Group*, October 25 = 227 registrants, 70 live attendees
- *Project Management Interest Group Presentations*, October 26 = 65 registrants, 26 live attendees
- *Library Leaders Lounge: Artificial Intelligence*, hosted by the Library Leaders & Managers Interest Group, November 8 = 48 registrants, 20 live attendees
- *The ABCs of LCDGT (Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms)*, hosted by the Authority Control Interest Group, November 30 = 1,137 registrants, 729 live attendees
- *Library Leaders Lounge: Managing Neurodiverse Employees*, hosted by the Library Leaders & Managers Interest Group, December 13 = 113 registrants, 48 live attendees
- *Library Leaders Lounge*, hosted by the Library Leaders & Managers Interest Group, January 10 = 60 registrants, 15 live attendees
- *Project Management Interest Group Brown Bag*, January 18 = 27 registrants, 11 live attendees

Marketing and Promotion July - December

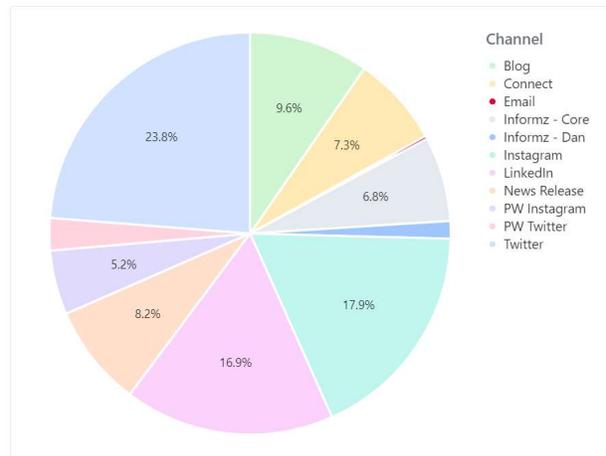
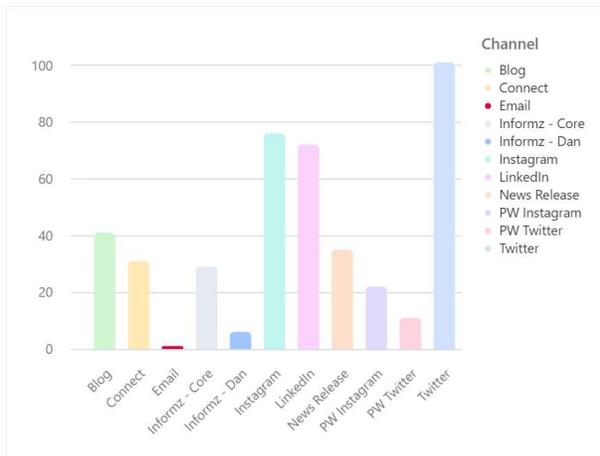
Our Instagram account continues to grow, and we now have 513 followers there. After analyzing statistics on our Twitter account, we made a recommendation to stop posting there starting November 1. The recommendation was accepted, and we redirected this energy to a [new LinkedIn page](#). Thank you to staff members Mia Blixt-Shehan and Amber Robbin for their work to get our page up and running. We currently have 349 followers there.



For July – December, Amber and Mia published 425 items across all our channels, including:

- 41 blog posts on [Core News](#)
- 31 posts in Core Connect groups
- 29 Informz emails to members, including 6 newsletters
- 76 Instagram posts on the Core account
- 22 Instagram posts on the Preservation Week account
- 72 LinkedIn posts
- 35 news releases
- 25 This Week in Core posts

We published the most items in September (94) and the fewest in July and December (47).



Additional Projects

We received 17 requests from members for access to the WMS Sandbox for this period. One person noted, “I definitely think it is a super cool perk for being a member!!”

We added 41 new recordings to the [webinars archive available exclusively to members](#), bringing the total number available to 154.

We launched a new [Core Store](#) design based on a suggestion from Core member Cindi B. We added two versions of it: “I’m the Core of my library” and “I’m a librarian to my Core.” We have two additional ideas we hope to implement later this year.



Due to an email issue with our IG Chairs group (see the Challenges section below), we’ve added five more hours to [Interest Group Week](#), increasing our programming to 30 hours of free content. Luckily, the [Interest Group Coordination Committee](#) is increasing its involvement this year to handle more of the logistics, which will be a big help. We couldn’t have made this move without knowing they’d be willing to help.

Behind-the-Scenes Work

We spent considerable time completing the final automations of our division-level committee chairs, section-level committee chairs, interest group chairs, and section leader group rosters. We also added two welcome emails for every interest group, one that’s sent to members and one that’s sent to non-members that includes a recruitment pitch.

To better manage emails coming into our generic Core email addresses, we configured and implemented a Core helpdesk within ALA’s ZohoDesk account. This has already helped us coordinate responses to 43 tickets while starting to build a knowledge base for quickly responding to the most frequently asked questions. In the future, we hope to add the knowledge base to our website.

One of our biggest accomplishments during this time was Amber Robbin’s creation and implementation of our first automated email campaign. It’s the most complex campaign any ALA unit has implemented, and it integrates targeted content to section members. One component of the campaign will help us understand why members are joining Core so that we can customize the content they receive based on their expressed interests. Over the next six months, we hope this will increase retention of new members. Next, Amber will work on creating campaigns for renewing and lapsed members.

CHALLENGES

- We ran into significant communication obstacles over the past seven months. While we've been working on implementing multiple automated email campaigns, we've had to rely on daily one-off emails to renewing members. Two of these regularly scheduled messages suddenly stopped sending to all renewing members, which we didn't discover for several months because the system doesn't provide failure notifications. We now have to manually check these scheduled messages every month to make sure they're still running. We also encountered issues with portions of our monthly newsletter not displaying correctly and some of our chairs and section leaders not receiving email from leadership groups in ALA Connect. ALA is currently working with the vendor, Higher Logic, to resolve all these issues.
- Our biggest membership and marketing challenge continues to be our inability to contact more than one-third of our members using the Informz email marketing software because they have unsubscribed from ALA emails. Of our current 4,200+ members, we can send membership and marketing emails to only 2,700 of them, which severely limits our ability to promote the value and benefits of Core membership. In FY23, we saw the trend of unsubscribes to Informz messages increase from 33% to 36%. At our request, ALA IT investigated the issue with template footers across the association and has said a report will be released internally this spring.
- I'll be retiring in April, which will leave Amber Robbin as the only staff member to handle all membership engagement and tasks until a new staff member can be hired. I have the utmost confidence in Amber's ability to continue our progress and our team and members' commitment to support her until the new person is on board. Core is an amazing group of people, and I'm really going to miss my colleagues and our members. Being part of Core has been the best possible way to end my library career. Thank you, and a big high five, to all of you who have inspired me during my time at ALA.