Core LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE FUTURES

Core President's Report to ALA Council

June 2022

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Core entered the 2022-23 coming out of startup mode, and its leaders and members looked for ways to help what was working. While we experienced a number of challenges throughout the year, we overall had a productive year, and will enter next year on much more stable footing.

About Core

Core's Mission

To cultivate and amplify the collective expertise of library workers in core functions through community building, advocacy, and learning.

Core's Vision

Core members play a central role in every library, shaping the future of the profession by striking a balance between maintenance and innovation, process and progress, collaborating and leading.

Core's Value Proposition for Members

At some phases of your career, you will need Core. At other phases, Core will need you.

For and by members, Core delivers mentoring, learning, networking, and leadership opportunities across library types and experience levels. We support each other through collective challenges by building and sustaining a more equitable and accessible future, one Core member at a time.

Leadership

Board

Core's board has benefitted from a number of members who served on the boards of the prior divisions that made up Core, and who were able to bring that experience to these startup years. The board has a mix of representatives of different library types and backgrounds, and we were able to carry that forward into our newly elected directors-at-large, Miranda Bennett and Kevin King. Our new president-elect will be Angie Ohler, who is past-chair of the Metadata & Collections Section. We had to adjust these positions according to our bylaws and with the advice of the ALA Parliamentarian when the original winner for president-elect had to decline the position for personal reasons, and are grateful to all our candidates for their flexibility. I want to thank our outgoing board members Lindsay Cronk, Tyler Dzuba, and Evviva Weinraub Lajoie for all their massive efforts these last years, and look forward to continuing to work with Wendy Tressler, Core's president 2023-24 when I move to the past-president role.

Staff

Core's staff had a number of changes in this last year. Kerry Ward resigned as Core's Executive Director at the end of September 2022. We all missed his leadership, but were very happy that Julie Reese, who was Director of Leadership & Learning was willing to step into the Interim Executive Director role. We are so grateful to Julie's leadership and hard work that have helped us through the challenges of the year. In December 2022, Brooke Morris-Chott, the Advocacy and EDI Program Officer resigned for another exciting professional opportunity. Given the strategic importance of building membership and marketing, we opted to fill a vacant Membership & Marketing Specialist position first, and were pleased to welcome Amber Robbin in that role in APRIL 2023. I am so grateful to the Core staff for taking on so many challenges this year. We are hopeful that we will continue to stabilize revenue and build up a staff to support all the dreams that core has.

Strategic Planning

At the end of the 2022 year, we reached the end of the period for the Strategic Action Plan, which was a brief one year plan designed to work through the startup period. Thus in the summer of 2022 we began the process of creating a new strategic plan, aimed to run through 2025.

Process

At the Annual Conference in June 2022, the board held its first in-person meeting in Core's existence. We split into small groups and worked with members who attended the meeting on a design thinking exercise that had two aims: first, to create the value proposition for members, and second, to identify elements of the strategic plan that we wanted to include. At the August board retreat, we did some visioning exercises such as writing an imaginary press release for a Core initiative that would have occurred because of the plan and the steps we took to get there. We discussed a draft of the plan in September, and then held several meetings with our section leadership to finish the plan in November 2022. We shared this draft widely with membership, and a small team of board members and section leadership completed final edits in December 2022, and the board approved the plan at the February 10, 2023 meeting.

Elements of the Strategic Plan

The strategic areas that we identified are membership and value to members, career building and recognition, and evaluating and adjusting Core's structure. The first two are normal for ALA divisions and perhaps self-evident, but the last one was particularly necessary due to the where Core is. With so much of the structure and running of Core having been created by various teams over a few years, with the pandemic occurring in the midst of that work, there were a number of structural assumptions and logistical needs that we did not have in place. Without that, it is far more difficult to reach our other goals, so that was a major effort for this year, particularly for me. This work began long before my presidential year, as I started compiling committees with unclear charges or without enough members during the appointments process.

Organizational Structure

This element of the strategic plan had the aim that Core's structure, including sections, committees, and projects will be evaluated and adjusted based on the needs of members and communities. While some of these efforts are on-going, this has been a major board and section

focus this year in order to set up the other strategic aims for better success. Some of the major efforts are outlined below, but overall, the newly staffed Organization & Bylaws Committee has worked very hard to create policies and procedures, review structure, make recommendations on board actions about structure, and review Core's Bylaws for necessary updates.

Section Realignment

The sections of Core represent different topical areas with similar professional needs. Several of the sections are analogs to the prior divisions, but others are different arrangements of existing professional communities within those prior divisions that aim to remove professional barriers. While some of the sections in Core are extremely active and successful, others have struggled. Such was the case for the Assessment Section. Assessment is a key component of library work across all library types and functions, but we found that recruiting leaders or members for the section was challenging. In October 2022, a team consisting of a few board members and members interested in the work of the section met to discuss the future for this section. We determined in this conversation that the topic of assessment is critical at a division level, but that the current structure was making sharing that work challenging. We thus made the decision to dissolve the Assessment Section and create a new committee to carry out the proposed work of the section. We are hopeful that this makes assessment a more visible piece of Core, and have already fully staffed the new committee.

In the opposite situation, a number of conversations with members of the preservation related committees over the years indicated that while their work was embedded across Core in many ways, this fairly small professional community felt the lack of a community that spoke to their needs specifically. I worked very closely with them in the fall of 2022 to help craft a request to create a Preservation Section, which the board approved in February 2023. I look forward to seeing what this passionate and dedicated group can do now that they are united in a section.

Committee Realignment

Throughout the fall of 2022, the board discussed needs for committees. Many of the committees, while they had excellent theoretical reasons for existing, were finding it a challenge to carry out their work. The numbers of committees within Core and its sections hovered around 70, with over 35 of those at the division level. The infrastructure needs for each committee are huge: all require staff time, a board liaison, reporting infrastructure, and communication. Thus we knew we needed to dissolve and/or combine committees. While some of the new committees will be much larger, each revamped committee has a new charge with more specific deliverables, and hopefully will reduce effort for everyone.

Publications

In efforts that hit all three elements of our strategic plan, the Publications Coordination Committee and all its subcommittees, including the journal editorial boards and the Monographs Editorial Board have been working proactively to improve the experience of authors and ensure relevant, high-quality content. Some highlights of this work are creating drop-in sessions for potential authors to discuss the process, looking for ways to provide mentoring opportunities between experienced and new authors, and creating standardized policies and procedures.

Journal Migration and Open Access

As part of alignment efforts to reduce complexity, the plan was always to move all three Core journals (*Information Technology in Libraries, Library Leadership and Management, and Library Resources & Technical* Services) to a single platform rather than the three different hosts they were using in the previous division homes. The journal editors worked collaboratively with Core staff on issuing an RFP and identifying the best option for journal hosting. January 2023, the board voted to approve the migration of all three journals to ALA Production Services, and furthermore to make *LRTS* open access, which was a goal all along. While the migration is still underway, we are excited to make this content open to all. One concern is sustainability—Core will be paying a significant fee to ALA for hosting, which will require different funding models with sponsors and institutions, and is an opportunity to look at ways ALA can work together across divisions to keep journal quality high and open access affordable for divisions.

Core Forum, Programming, and Continuing Education

The career building and recognition element of the strategic plan is that Core will help members develop skills throughout the course of their careers and recognize and support professionals at all stages. We continue to find new ways to deliver programming, as well as building on past successes. Some highlights are listed below:

- The Continuing Education Coordination Committee coordinated web courses, webinars, and e-forums on many topics of relevance to Core. The number of hours they put into this work is incredible, and truly makes Core sustainable. Supporting their work is a key piece of the strategic plan, and we have focused some efforts on reorganizing committees to specifically help with key aspects of CE work.
- The Conference Programming Committee selected 30 programs for the Annual Conference and served as a poster jury as well.
- Interest Group Week, which is a chance for all our interest groups to deliver free content to anyone interested was very successful this year, with 2,798 people registering 7,900 times for 24 sessions held over a 5-day period.

Inaugural Core Forum

Chaired by President-elect Wendy Tressler, the first in person conference for Core took place October 13-15, 2022, in Salt Lake City with a theme of "Together Again". There were 272 registrants, 40 presentations, 15 posters, and 5 preconferences and tours. The keynote speakers were C. Thi Nyguen, who spoke about games in libraries and how gaming connects to leadership skills, and Jonathan Moody, who spoke about the role of library architecture in shaping library experiences and overall, how architecture fits into DEI efforts. While the conference did not break even, we learned lessons about how to shape the budget for next year to match expenses and revenue. As an investment in member connections and identity, however, it was extremely successful.

One note about the Core Forum is that because it took place in Utah, many potential attendees were unable to use work funding to travel to the conference, and others were concerned about travel on their own. We feel that having events in locations where library workers may be under attack is important to build solidarity among them, but we also recognized the difficulties and concerns for outsiders. We partnered with the Utah Library Association Advocacy Committee to

learn about their efforts, gave them a spot to speak at the conference, and made donations to LGBTQ+ organizations in Utah. While it not financially feasible to offer a hybrid conference, we offered a series of webinars where presenters who were selected from popular sessions delivered the content again, so we were able to make some of the content available to those who could not attend.

Awards

At the Annual Conference in 2022, the Core board voted to approve a new slate of awards proposed by the Awards Committee called the "LIFT Awards" that would replace the focused awards from the prior divisions by recognizing people across all areas of library work represented by Core, and in particular support early and mid-career professionals. They collaborated with several committees, most notably the Fundraising and Sponsorships Committee to take that dream and secure funding and create procedures to make this a reality, which will be later in 2023.

Value to Members Highlights

- At the Core Forum in October 2022, we announced a new member benefit: access to OCLC's Worldshare Management sandbox. The aim of this is to allow Core members to have real experience with a library system that they can use to build their careers. This will expand into other sandboxes available to members who want to learn more about technology.
- The Core Leadership Development Mentoring Program launched in fall 2022. This has not been formally evaluated yet, but anecdotally it has been popular with members.
- Preservation Week took place April 30-May 6, 2023, and featured Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. This event provides free webinars and helps promote library events.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Highlights

Core's basic value proposition is that we support our members to build a more equitable and accessible future. This work happens across the division in numerous ways; however, we have ambitious goals that require significant financial and personnel resources. While we work to build up our capacity for these efforts, we have several highlights from this year.

- The Diversity and Inclusion Committee surveyed members. To goal for this survey was to learn about the perceptions and aspirations of Core membership towards the Division's priorities for advancing our agenda with respect to ADEI. Results of this survey indicated that people saw a lack of diversity within the organization, concerns about returning to in-person events without financial support for travel, and a lack of belief that actual change would happen. Some survey respondents pointed to a lack of tolerance for differing beliefs or political perspectives from a more conservative perspective. The Core board plans to engage more with the Diversity & Inclusion Committee to define a list of specific action items to address these survey findings, but we know that new programs such as the Mentorship Program and some fundraising goals for travel support will help address a few points.
- The International Relations Committee continues to distribute funding for free continuing education to international librarians.

- The *ITAL* Editorial board created a DEIA statement and distributed a diversity survey to its reviewers and board members.
- Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Access and Equity Section Leadership Team signed up for the ALA EDI Assembly.
- The Metadata & Collections Section endorsed the ICOLC Statement on the Metadata Rights of Libraries and wrote a response to a query from the World Jewish Congress with recommendations about classification of Holocaust denial literature.

Coming Next Year

As I round out my presidential year, I am focused on three efforts: my Core President's Program at ALA Annual, finalizing a round of edits to the Core Handbook, and creating a project team to create a system for tracking strategic plan achievements and necessary edits. We have much work to do to build on the successes of this past year, but hopefully with a streamlined structure and renewed energy to connect library professionals in core library functions.

Core Forum 2023 will take place October 19-21, 2023, in New Orleans, and we hope to welcome many attendees from across ALA. A few preconferences are designed to help with leadership skills and networking, and a return of in person AvramCamp, which supports and provides leadership skills women and non-binary people in library technology.

Building up the leadership and management areas of Core, both in the Leadership & Management Section and across the division, is a key area for this next year. One major task will be a renewed effort to bring back the Leadership Institute, which will require partnering across ALA to secure the resources for such a major initiative.

Core has been in many ways an experiment for what a new American Library Association could be, and the lessons learned hold value across the association. We look forward to continuing to support our members' needs and working to build a stronger division in partnership with ALA.