

## ***On Taking the ALA Pulse (TAP)***

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to know the opinions and needs of the individuals who comprise a large organization at any point in time. One approach to answering the question: What do the members want? is to ask them. That is precisely what Taking the ALA Pulse (TAP) does.

ALA's governance priorities must be set with the benefit of regularly solicited input from its members and affiliated units. As a member-based organization, the American Library Association (ALA) should listen to and learn from its individual members and affiliated entities, and, more importantly, respond in a timely and effective manner to members' wants and needs. Member satisfaction should increase if ALA's governance responds to member comment in a survey. To accomplish this task ALA should create a mechanism to regularly determine the opinions and ideas of membership or "to take the pulse of ALA."

This mechanism (TAP) must be the process by which ALA leadership places current and emerging governance issues before the ALA members and units for input. Such issues may include ones identified by the ALA leadership as well as ones initiated by ALA members and units.

The TAP mechanism should be multifaceted. ALA Governance Office could manage using existing staff or by creating a new office with staff hired specifically to direct TAP.

Methodology would include:

- General surveys with multiple questions that could determine significance or ongoing Issues as raised by individual members and the various affiliated units
- Focused questions to determine such aspects as members' choice for a specific course of action
- Member response to issues that the Board and/or Advisory Assembly forward to the TAP mechanism for input.
- Member response to Issues raised by non-members (library users for example).

The ALA Governance Office (or TAP office) would regularly assemble the input from TAP and direct it to the ALA function which is most suitable for addressing it, whether ALA Staff, the Board, or Advisory Assembly, an ALA Office, Committee, or other unit as well as report finds to the Board and membership,

Besides receiving input from member surveys and other venues, TAP could create a "*Taking the Pulse*" dedicated webpage or social media function that would provide regular and timely reports to membership and affiliated units on how TAP responses have been applied or proposed applications that are still under discussion.

In addition to the directed efforts of ALA Governance Office or TAP office, recurring opportunities called TAP Sessions would be useful for members to gather (virtually or in person) to put forward ideas, respond to actions, or initiatives. The results of these sessions would be integrated into reports from the more formal TAP surveys and evaluations.