



## Executive Summary of 2022 ALA Membership Study

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**Overview:** In August 2022, the American Library Association (ALA) engaged Avenue M Group, LLC., an independent research and consulting firm to conduct an in-depth membership research study. Understanding that ALA membership has declined in recent years, and it had been several years since the last study with Avenue M was conducted, the desired objectives of the research included:

- Explore the needs, interests, behaviors, awareness, and perceptions of members and nonmembers.
- Identify programs and services that will engage members and cement long-term relationships throughout the librarian community.
- Identify any unique differences and commonalities among ALA's various market segments.
- Better align the membership model with the needs and wants of members.
- Benchmark progress compared to the previous ALA and Ave M study conducted in 2018.

The Executive Summary ties together key findings from the survey into a summary highlighting the most important takeaways from the research. It is meant to provide a brief summation of the report and Avenue M's interpretation of the data. Additional details on differences between important respondent segments are included in the full report and will be highlighted in Avenue M's presentation on February 21, 2023. Overall, Avenue M analyzed over 6,900 respondent surveys (including members, former members, and never been members) from the survey fielding that occurred November 22, 2022 to Monday, December 12, 2022.

### Satisfaction, Value, and NPS

Overall, members perceive ALA membership in a positive light but there is room for improvement.

1. Slightly more than six in ten (62%) of members are satisfied or extremely satisfied with membership. This is +5% from the 2018 survey.
2. About one-third (34%) of members feel connected or extremely connected to ALA. This is the same percentage as in 2018.
3. About one-third (32%) of current members are considered Promoters of ALA, meaning they are very likely to recommend membership in the organization to their colleagues and peers.
4. ALA has an overall Net Promoter Score of -1.5. The NPS for members is +10.5; the NPS for former members is -45.9. The NPS of +10.5 is below the average for associations found in the Avenue M database (+25).
5. The top five words used to describe ALA are informative, important, bureaucratic, credible, and expensive.
6. Two-thirds of members believe the value they receive from ALA membership is equal to or greater than the cost of dues. One-third think the value is less than the cost. (This is slightly higher than what Avenue M sees with other associations.) Nearly half of members think the membership experience would be improved if the cost of dues were lowered.



## Strengths

7. Nearly two-thirds of members (65%) think ALA national advocates effectively on behalf of their profession and about half of members (49%) feel ALA national helps them stay up to date on the latest information in their profession.
8. ALA offerings that respondents are most satisfied with (>25% extremely satisfied) with include:
  - Division Conference/Symposium/Forum (37%),
  - ALA Annual Conference (2022)(37%),
  - Unite Against Book Bans campaign (27%),
  - Book purchase(s) from the ALA store (27%),
  - ALA Standards and Guidelines (26%), and
  - Libraries Transform public awareness resources (24%).
9. ALA does well in helping address the following member challenges: 1) keeping professionals up-to-date with new trends and developments in the field, 2) helping professionals expand their knowledge/level of expertise, and 3) providing opportunities for professionals to expand their network/connections with other library professionals.

## Areas of Opportunity

10. Respondents want ALA to be more affordable, inclusive, accessible, collaborative, and informative.
11. Members would feel more connected to ALA with more/improved onboarding for new members and refreshers for existing members, learning new things from ALA offerings, and meeting with/collaborating with peers. (Note, ALA implemented a new onboarding plan in 2022.)
12. There are opportunities to improve satisfaction levels with numerous offerings, like ALA's social media, the ALA Annual Conference 2022 Digital Experience, LibLearnX 2022, and ALA's career resources.
13. Overall, dealing with increasingly highly stressful situations in their library, keeping up with new trends and developments in the field, and dealing with budget constraints are challenges likely to be faced by many segments in the profession, but specifically higher for directors/chief officers/administrators and deans/faculty. These are areas ALA can offer more resources in.

## Price

14. Among all respondents, the median price for what respondents think a bargain is for membership is \$100. A price of \$200 is considered too expensive to join or renew.

## Benefits Usage

15. On average, respondents used 4.6 out of 24 ALA offerings (17%) in the past two years. Offerings with the highest usage include *American Libraries* (60%), ALA Connect (32%), and ALA Standards and Guidelines (31%).



16. Within the past two years, volunteer opportunities, ALA social media accounts, and virtual experiences like the Midwinter Meeting and LibLearnX were used the least.

### **Impact of the Pandemic**

17. Roughly two-thirds of respondents are in the same or similar role as they were in 2020 (before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.) Slightly more than one in ten (14%) left their previous job and gained employment elsewhere in the same industry.

18. Close to seven in ten respondents (68%) said their budget for membership has stayed about the same since the COVID-19 pandemic, while nearly three in ten (29%) say it has decreased or significantly decreased. When it comes to professional development, about six in ten (61%) respondents say their budget has stayed about the same, while over one-third (32%) indicate theirs has decreased or significantly decreased since the pandemic.

19. Close to half of respondents (48%) say they will attend more online (on-demand) learning now than they did before the pandemic, and about four in ten (42%) plan to attend more virtual (live) learning.

### **DEIA and Social Issues**

20. One quarter or more of respondents indicated during the past two years (2021 and 2022) they think ALA has made great progress in supporting intellectual freedom, expanding virtual conference options, improving Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (EDISJ) resources, and promoting/increasing public policy and advocacy efforts.

21. About four in ten respondents think accessibility (43%), race (42%), disability (41%), and ethnicity (39%) are the top areas respondents feel or believe the library community needs to put greater emphasis on or improve. Only 3% of respondents think DEIA is fine as is.