

Staff Talking Points: 2019 ALA Midwinter Meeting – Seattle

What's New at ALA and What's Up with All the Change?

- The work of libraries and associated disciplines and the needs of library stakeholders are transforming, and ALA is, too. In the near future, we will be moving to a new headquarters that will allow us to lead the profession and support our stakeholders and members more effectively, improve workplace practices and efficiencies, and develop new talent and skills to respond to new challenges. We are making new investments in IT, advocacy, and development. And we are exploring new ways of working by reviewing our governance structure, membership model, communications practices, and business development opportunities, as well as preparing to welcome a new executive director to the organization.

Wait, ALA is Moving?

- On December 18, 2018, ALA's Executive Board agreed to sign a letter of intent with an external party interested in buying ALA's Chicago real estate assets. We have now entered a period of review that will continue over the next three to four months as the parties proceed with due diligence and negotiations.
- This is a complex process and unfortunately nothing is certain. At this point, the source and amount of the offer we are entertaining cannot be shared. As is often the case with real estate transactions, the timeline is very fluid.
- Concurrently, ALA management has engaged the services of an architect and a change management specialist to begin a parallel process of reviewing our options for a new workspace and understanding how we can use this opportunity to improve ALA's culture of innovation and collaboration. After Midwinter, look for a staff survey that will help guide planning.
- We are committed to finding a new home in downtown Chicago, convenient to public transportation for both staff and visiting members. If the deal currently on the table is completed, we could potentially be looking at a move by the end of 2019.

How Does this Impact ALA's Finances?

- Proceeds from a real estate sale would be put into our endowment. Essentially, we are seeking to convert a real estate asset to an endowment asset, where it will generate additional operating revenue from investment returns for the Association and its various programs.
- Some of the proceeds will be used in the move itself, but most will be invested in the ALA endowment.
- In addition, it is anticipated that leasing space will cost less per year than the operating expenses associated with owning an aging property.

What Else Should I Know?

Organizational Effectiveness and Governance Review

- A Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) is working to carry out a comprehensive review and study of ALA's governance, member participation, and legal structures and systems, with the goal of proposing changes that will revitalize its success, strength, and agility as a 21st century association. The group is being assisted by consulting firm Tecker International.
- Members and staff are invited to contribute to SCOE's work at sessions at Midwinter (see [ALA Scheduler](#)).

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- Due to existing Association bylaws, any changes to ALA's governance will be voted on by Council, which means we are several years away from implementing anything new. Further, it is expected that changes will be accompanied by a transition plan to ensure an orderly change.

Membership and Communications Study

- In spring 2018, ALA contracted with Avenue M, a Chicago-based consulting firm, to conduct a communications and membership study, with the goal of improving services for and communication with members
- The extensive survey results and consultant recommendations are still being reviewed by ALA staff and committees. They are expected to inform changes in processes, communications and structures over the coming year.

Internal Changes and IT Assessment

- IT is an area of major investment, but the combination of ALA's complexity and rapidly changing technology led the Association to contract with DelCor, an IT consulting firm, to conduct an assessment of ALA IT.
- The initial assessment is currently in its final stage and next steps are being defined. ALA has contracted with an Interim Chief Information Officer (to guide overall strategic direction and create a technology roadmap) and a strategic consultant (to audit ALA's digital properties). These positions are being funded as part of ALA's investment budget.

ALA Midwinter Meeting

- Over the past two years, the ALA Conference Committee has discussed options to (a) change Midwinter, (b) eliminate Midwinter, and (c) eliminate the present Midwinter but replace with an alternative event.
- In Seattle, the ALA Conference Committee will be seeking discussion and feedback on a proposal to replace the current Midwinter Meeting with an alternative event.
- Initial implementation is planned for January 2021, in Indianapolis, and 2022, in San Antonio. An announcement about the new event is expected in Fall 2019.
- ALA Conference Committee will gather feedback and continue to improve the format and related processes. Following this Midwinter Meeting, discussions will continue in ALA Connect.

ALA Executive Director Search

- The new ALA Executive Director search is expected to open in February 2019 and conclude in October 2019. After review by ALA Human Resources and the ALA Executive Board, Isaacson Miller will continue as the search firm to assist in this important search.
- Mary Ghikas will continue as Executive Director through 2020 Midwinter and will work with the ALA Executive Board to introduce the new Executive Director to the community at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia.

I Have – or Have Been Asked -- Another Question that's Not Addressed Here!

- Please email or tell others they can contact CMO@ala.org