TO: Core Board of Directors

TOPIC: December 2022 Core Membership Report

ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT: Report

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

SUBMITTED: December 16, 2022

SUMMARY

Membership statistics in this report are from September 2021 – August 2022, as these are the most current statistics we have from ALA.

During FY22, Core membership dropped approximately 12%. In May 2022, we migrated the process to join a Core section from ALA Connect to ALA's join/renew form on the Ecommerce site. As a result, we began tracking join and drop numbers for our sections.

Overall trends show a continued need to increase staff capacity to focus on both recruitment and retention. Throughout FY22, we saw a decrease in the number of year-over-year membership drops, with fewer people leaving Core every month in FY22 than had left during that month in FY21. For example, in September 2021, 236 members dropped their Core membership. In September 2022, that number was 133. We do not yet have any figures for FY23, but this is a positive trend that we are working hard to continue.

For all six of our sections, the monthly joins from May through August 2022 showed increases every month, another positive trend. We already customize our content by section (see example), so higher section participation has been a major goal for us. We plan to build on this segmented approach to content in the future.

View the full spreadsheet of Membership Statistics for more granular numbers dating back to September 2020.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT DURING FY23 Q1

During Q1, several Core groups held successful online events.

- *Authority Control Interest Group Virtual Program*, September 27 = 579 registrations, 409 live attendees
- *Continuing Resources Cataloging Committee Forum*, September 29 = 345 registrants, 202 live attendees
- *Technical Services Managers in Academic Libraries Interest Group Virtual Brown Bag Discussion*, November 3 = 108 registrants, 64 live participants

- *Collection Evaluation & Assessment Interest Group*, November 8 = 20 registrants, 11 live attendees
- *Core OCLC WMS Sandbox Orientation*, November 17 = 42 registrants, 28 live attendees

For member leaders, we also held a Committee Chairs Orientation, an Interest Group Chairs Town Hall, and monthly Section Leader meetings. We also saw sections begin holding regular monthly meetings with the chairs from their committees and interest groups.

Members continue to give us positive feedback about our weekly "This Week in Core" email to members, started in March 2022.

In October 2022, we introduced a significant new member benefit, free access to the OCLC WorldShare Management Services Sandbox, the test environment for the WMS platform. This allows Core members seeking professional development opportunities a chance to work hands-on with a cloud-based library management system to gain new skills and knowledge they can't get anywhere else.

The response was positive and enthusiastic, with 64 members signing up in the first two months. An orientation to the system was held on November 17, and the recording has been added to our archive of on-demand webinars available exclusively to members. We also received positive feedback from two library schools that are interested in bringing the benefit of Core membership to their students to give them access to the WMS Sandbox.

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee ran a survey to learn about the perceptions and aspirations of membership towards the Division's priorities for advancing our agenda with respect to accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI). Results were shared in a session at the Core Forum and will be used to guide the Committee's work.

The Leadership Development & Mentoring Committee opened applications for the first cohort of our mentoring program, which will launch in January with 20 pairs of mentors & mentees.

Our Library Binding Survey Project Team ran a survey during September and is going through the results for publication in 2023.

The Reading Club Facilitation Team hosted discussions each month.

- September = *The Art of Gathering* by Priya Parker
- October = The group read "How much should we trust technology?" and "How we can understand ourselves through games" by C. Thi Nguyen and then watched Jonathan Moody's TEDx Talk, "Design is an Act of Hope." Both Nguyen and Moody were keynote speakers at the Forum.
- November = "Algorithmic Literacy and the Role for Libraries," by Core member Mike Ridley. The article was published in ITAL and won Publication of the Year from the Artificial Intelligence Special Interest Group of the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T).
- December = "The Effectiveness and Durability of Digital Preservation & Curation Systems," a 2022 Ithaka S+R report.

PLANS FOR FY23 Q2

Work has already begun on an automated email outreach campaign for new members, which we plan to implement in January 2023.

Our next Volunteer Fair is scheduled for January 9, and planning is underway for Interest Group Week, which will take place March 6-10. There are 25 time slots for IG Week, and 19 of them are already full.

Staff are working on a proposal to take to a handful of library schools to bring their students into Core to give them access to our sandboxes, free webinars for students, and archive of recordings. If the pilot program is successful, we will expand it in the future.

This past fall, our Diversity & Inclusion Committee implemented a liaison program with each Core committee. EDI liaisons will submit their first biannual reports as part of this program in January 2023. The reports will allow us to better understand, coordinate, and amplify all the DEI activities happening across Core, as well as help us identify gaps that need to be addressed.

The Content Coordination Committee has begun dividing up content areas and will begin creating career pathways using Core content.

The Preservation Outreach Committee is working on selecting a spokesperson for Preservation Week 2023 in April. They're also creating procedures for migrating the "Dear Donia" questions previously submitted by the public to the new [Preservation Week](#) site, which hopefully will happen in time to make the treasure trove of answers available for the April celebration.

Members who work in preservation have submitted a proposal to become a new Core section. The Board will discuss the proposal at its January meeting. If approved at the February Board meeting, we'll work with members to put infrastructure in place to launch the new section September 1, 2023.

The Board will also discuss and vote on whether to migrate the Assessment Section to a committee and interest group within the Leadership & Management Section, which may better fit the capacity for work around this topic.

The Web Committee is working on plans to implement a new set of sandboxes available exclusively to members. This round of offers will focus on open source software and they are investigating offering Drupal, Joomla, WordPress, and possibly Matomo (a privacy-based analytics solution for websites).

CHALLENGES

- In December 2022, Brooke Morris-Chott, the Advocacy and EDI Program Officer left Core/ALA. Her duties will be distributed to remaining Core staff until a new hire is in place.
- To increase membership recruitment and retention, Core will conduct a search to fill the open Membership & Marketing Specialist position rather than the advocacy/EDI one.
- Our biggest membership and marketing challenge continues to be our inability to contact *one-third* of our members using the Informz email marketing software because they have unsubscribed from ALA emails there. Of our current 4,100+ members, we can send membership and marketing emails to only 2,800 of them, which severely limits our ability to promote the value and benefits of Core membership. In FY22, we have seen the trend of unsubscribes to Informz messages increase from 25% in FY21 to 33% in FY22. In a quick scan of Informz groups,

we believe this to be a system-wide issue that is affecting every ALA unit, including all divisions and round tables. We are asking ALA to conduct an audit of the opt-out options on every Informz template in the system to determine if any settings need to be corrected to reduce the increase in unsubscribe rates.