

TO: LITA Board of Directors

TOPIC: Vice-President's Report

ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT: REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: Emily Morton-Owens, LITA Vice-President

DATE: June 19, 2019

Below are the primary activities I have been active in since we last met at the Midwinter Meeting.

Appointments Committee

The Appointments Committee helped me finalize 133 appointments by my rough count.

Unfortunately, we did not make the move to the new Volunteer Manager application in ALA Connect, so we continued the process using the old system, which is good enough for making the appointments but not very good at managing the volunteers. I think this necessitated extra work to make sure we were asking interested parties to join the right committees, and make sure we weren't trying to recruit the same people.

Because so many members volunteer for the same few committees, we populated many committees from "extra" volunteers for Top Tech Trends, etc., attempting to match their prior experience or interests where possible. This definitely led to us needing to ask more people, since volunteers were more likely to turn us down for committees they hadn't explicitly volunteered for. I mention this because it may be helpful to tell new members that certain (less popular) committees are a good way to get started in order to recruit more volunteers who expect to serve on those committees.

We also removed several additional committee members who had not been able to participate fully in their groups. This was the result of board liaisons and the committee chairs coordinator soliciting feedback from chairs about how things were progressing. Members who ended up stepping down seemed grateful to have been given an appropriate out.

During this year's recruitments we got only a small number of questions about the outlook for LITA's committees and their work in a post-merger world. I expect that more communication about the merger will result in more questions; we should discuss how to frame participation in 2020 and beyond for our members. This could be part of a larger effort to communicate more clearly about expectations, scope, and timing for our volunteers. The new Committee Chairs Coordinator will be Kelly Sattler.

Much appreciation to the committee members: Jodie Gambill, Cody Hanson, Kevin Herrera, Hong Ma, and Eric Phetteplace.

Midwinter

In addition to the regular LITA Board meetings at Midwinter, I attended one of the SCOE presentations and the BARC/Division Leadership meeting. I also attended Wanda Brown's lunch for the presidents elect. At all of these ALA-level meetings, it seemed like SCOE, and speculation over which of the possible directions they might favor, was the theme of the day. Some of the potential reconfigurations were radical enough to spark strong feelings, though I noted that one of them, making a division your primary affiliation with big-ALA membership thrown in for free, could strengthen LITA or a new post-merger division.

I also hosted the LITA Town Hall, where we updated members about the status of the merger (not ready for voting, taking a pause before continuing planning) and had table discussions about what members value in LITA and their thoughts about a potential new division.

Regarding the mission, vision, and values statements for the new division, attendees were positive about the rationale and value, but felt the documents themselves were too vague and generic.

When asked what LITA should double down on to provide value to members, by far the most frequent answer was Forum, including specific suggestions for content. Many tables also discussed social events as a way to promote networking and cross-pollination (with one noting that LITA events are comfortable even for introverts). Low-barrier events like LITA chats also got mentioned.

Participants also noted down some concerns. One was cost and size for a new merged division--would there be niches and opportunities like there are now. Interest Groups also came in for some critique as requiring more resources, updates, and perhaps some sunset requirements to avoid the disappointing experience of a new member joining a moribund IG.

ASAE

In April I attended the ASAE CEO Symposium with Jenny Levine as well as the incoming ALCTS and LLAMA presidents. This was a very valuable experience for learning about how associations operate and develop. At times, it was reassuring to discover that our challenges aren't unusual--that we even have things in common with the National Wooden Pallet and Container Association! (Yes, one of our table mates.) Jenny and I worked through the discussion questions sometimes pertaining only to LITA and other times pertaining to a post-merger division. One theme that emerged from our work was member engagement, the member lifecycle, how to make members into volunteers into leaders.

We attended in the spring in order to coordinate with the other divisions, but I think I would ultimately have preferred to do this in the fall, since I learned a lot that might have been useful at Midwinter--especially the SCOE meetings.

Ongoing discussion with ALCTS & LLAMA Presidents Elect

I have had several additional conference calls with Jennifer Bowen and Anne Cooper Moore, which we intend to keep as a regular event. So far we have discussed two concrete activities to work on over the next year:

A joint Presidential Program. ALCTS plans their annual events with a committee that includes fundraising from vendors (not members). Because Jennifer had already done those appointments, she will designate two of the four people she appointed to work on the content, and two to be a fundraising subcommittee. Then Anne and I will each recruit two members from our divisions to be on the committee and work on the content as well. I've suggested that, from the LITA point of view, the content doesn't need to be technical but that our membership would like to see a speaker who can address some aspect of inclusion, access, or equity.

A task force to improve our ability to work online. If as a new division we wish to do more of our work exclusively online, we should have best practices for doing so, so volunteers know what they should be doing, and former members of the three divisions are all on the same page. This group would focus on creating something like ALCTS LibGuide for committee chairs and make suggestions for meeting format, frequency, preparation, etc. The recommendations wouldn't be requirements but would let leaders know that they're on the right track.

We are also viewing the Spring 2020 ALCTS Exchange and Fall 2020 LITA Forum as joint activities. ALCTS and LITA will contribute the organization expertise but all three divisions will contribute to the programming.

Member engagement and orientation

Over the past few months I've had a number of discussions with Jenny Levine about ways to enhance our member engagement and orientation. This fits in with the new LITA hire and is also something we can reasonably work on in the year before a merger goes through, possibly bringing some new wisdom and value to the new division.

Some of the specific ideas that have come up so far:

Mark Beatty's position has been refashioned with a new emphasis on member engagement and communication, which should offer us some new expertise and resources in this area.

We will be able to send messages to new members at intervals in their first year or two of membership, prompting them to take various actions in a way that's spread out and not overwhelming.

I'd like to work with Kelly as the Committee Chairs Coordinator to do an online orientation for new chairs that sets some ground rules about communicating with members, setting up meetings, documenting work, etc. Our committees are doing great work and many are humming along fine, but I've gotten a sense that some committee members aren't completely sure what's going on or what to expect. When they don't know what to expect, they don't realize when they fall out of the

loop or work isn't getting done. In short, let's train the committee chairs to train their members to be active participants. (This point also fits in with the task force I've discussed with ALCTS and LLAMA.)

Finally, we've talked about how to encourage members to grow through the organization, from new participants, to committee leaders, to elected positions. The board members reading this will be familiar with this progression, but many of us were encouraged through personal connections. How can we ensure that more members are making those connections? This is also an area of improvement for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

If we are able to improve the member experience in these areas, we can bring that to the new division, post-merger.

It has been a pleasure to work with the staff, board, and membership on these events and projects this year. I welcome members to contact me at egmowens.lita@gmail.com with their thoughts about enhancing the value of LITA membership or our future as a division.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily G. Morton-Owens