



An Invitation to Apply for the Position of Executive Director
American Library Association
Chicago, Illinois

Search Summary

Libraries are an iconic feature of American life. In study after study, libraries are ranked among the public's most trusted sources of information. They have introduced users to the joy of learning and the magic of books; have offered a safe and productive haven for study, research and reflection; and have transformed users' lives through educational programs and community resources. Not only have America's libraries changed the lives of many of their users, they themselves have transformed as societal needs, technology, and other forces in the economy have dramatically reshaped their role and nature. Libraries of all types have adapted to the digital age and are committed to meeting the evolving needs of their communities.

In July 2017, Executive Director, Keith Michael Fiels, retired after serving the American Library Association (ALA) for fifteen years. His tenure was marked by important developments in the field and the Association. Mary Ghikas, formerly Senior Associate Executive Director, is now serving as Executive Director. Mary will serve as Executive Director through ALA's Mid-Winter meeting, in January 2020. Upon the start of a new executive director, Mary will become Deputy Executive Director and she will work to support the orientation and transition of the new executive director through ALA's annual conference in June 2020.

ALA seeks a dynamic, innovative, entrepreneurial, and experienced leader as its next Executive Director. Founded in 1876, ALA is the world's oldest and largest library association and promotes the work of libraries and the value of professional library and information science education. It advocates for issues and values that are important to the field and to a free and open information society. ALA achieves these goals through its programs, publications, conferences, professional development and outreach work. The Association, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, represents over 58,000 members, and has a staff of 260 and an annual budget of \$52 million. The ALA also has an office in Washington DC.

The Washington Office is charged with following and influencing legislation, policy and regulatory issues of importance to the library field and its public. The Washington Office works to ensure that libraries are consistently involved in the legislative and policy decision-making processes. The ALA Washington

Office is involved in several collaborative relationships at the national level and works closely with ALA Chapters and other library-focused associations.

ALA has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed, in confidence, to the firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

THE ORGANIZATION

➤ History and Mission

Founded on October 6, 1876, during the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the mission of the ALA is “to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.” ALA is a 501(c)(3) association, incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

➤ Core Values

The Association is committed to:

- Extending and expanding library services in America and around the world
- All types of libraries – academic, public, school and special
- All librarians, library staff, trustees and other individuals and groups working to improve library services
- Member service
- An open, inclusive, and collaborative environment
- Ethics, professionalism and integrity
- Excellence and innovation
- Intellectual freedom
- Social responsibility and the public good

➤ **Strategic Priorities**

In June 2015, the ALA Council adopted a new Strategic Plan for the Association which outlined three strategic directions: *advocacy*, *information policy*, and *professional and leadership development*. In January 2017, the ALA Council adopted a fourth strategic direction: *equity, diversity and inclusion*. These strategic directions were identified as areas of intense focus for the next five years. For each strategic direction, goals articulate outcomes to be achieved and answer the question, “What would success look like?” Strategies are also in place for achieving each goal.

➤ **Governance Structure**

ALA is governed by an elected Council, which is its policy-making body, and an Executive Board led by the ALA President, which acts for the Council in the administration of established policies and programs. In this context, the Executive Board is the body that manages the affairs of the Association, delegating management of the Association’s day-to-day operation to the Executive Director. ALA has 37 standing committees and, as necessary, additional task forces and working groups. The Association’s operations are directed by the Executive Director and implemented by staff through a structure of programmatic offices and support units.

ALA is home to eleven membership divisions each focused on a type of library or library function, and each having an executive director, board and staff to manage its membership and programs. In addition, there are twenty round tables each with its own board and limited staff support. The divisions and round tables have their own standing committees, subcommittees, task forces, and working groups. A network of affiliates, chapters, and other organizations enables the ALA to reach a broad and diverse audience.

➤ **Staff and Office Locations**

The Executive Director currently has ten direct reports: Associate Executive Director, Washington Office; Associate Executive Director, Human Resources; Associate Executive Director, Publishing, Associate Executive Director, Offices and Member Relations; Chief Financial Officer; Director

Governance; Director, Center for the Future of Libraries; Director, Communication and Marketing; Director, Chapters & International Relations; and Director, Information Technology and Telephone Services. The majority of the 260-member staff is based in the Headquarters Office in Chicago, Illinois. Other office locations include Washington DC, where the national advocacy office is located; Pennsylvania where the United for Libraries staff is based; and Connecticut where the ACRL CHOICE publishing arm is based.

➤ **Budget**

The current operating budget of ALA is \$52 million. Major revenue sources include publishing income (34%); meetings & conferences (26%); dues (16%); grants and awards (10%); interest and dividends (3%); and other (11%). Major categories of expenses include, but are not limited to programming, staff salaries and benefits. The ALA endowment is currently valued at over \$40 million.

For additional information about ALA, including its various programs and services, please visit the organization's website at www.ala.org

The ALA Executive Director also serves as Executive Director of the ALA-Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA), a 501(c)(6) association incorporated in the State of Illinois. The ALA-APA exists to provide individual professional certification and to advocate for improved salaries and status for library workers. The ALA-APA is governed by a Council and Board of Directors, whose members are those individuals who serve concurrently as members of the ALA Council and ALA Executive Board.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director is appointed by and reports to the ALA Executive Board. He/she is a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Executive Board and serves as secretary for both the Board and the ALA Council, the governing body of the Association. Principal responsibilities of the role are:

➤ **Leadership**

- Provide the vision and inspiration to carry out the mission of ALA.

- Represent the interests of ALA and its membership by providing long-range planning, both strategic and operational; leading the strategic planning process; taking a proactive approach to determining the current and future needs of the Association. Administer ALA policies. Work effectively with the Executive Board and Council to develop, recommend and implement new or enhanced policies.
- Establish and sustain close working relationships with ALA leadership to maintain effective lines of communication with all membership units, divisions, affiliates and committees of the Association.
- **Management**
 - Maintain a sound operational structure for ALA. Provide for organizational effectiveness, management continuity, accountability, sustainability, and diversity in hiring and placement. Sustain a proactive, results-oriented staff that demonstrates teamwork and mutual support and functions effectively across the units of the organization. The Executive Director will capitalize on the talent and interests of the ALA membership and staff.
 - Expand the Association's current equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and support affirmative action requirements by creating and managing a diverse ALA workforce. Actively support ALA's scholarship efforts to recruit people of color and other underrepresented groups to the profession.
 - Establish a framework of sustainability to guide the association's work based on a triple bottom line, *environmentally sound, economically feasible, and socially equitable*.
 - Recognize the important and unique role libraries play in wider community conversations about resiliency, climate change, and a sustainable future and begins a new era of thinking sustainably in order to consider the economic, environmental and socially equitable viability of choices made on behalf of the association.

- Pursue sustainable choices when planning conferences and meetings and to actively promote best practices of sustainability through ALA publications, research and educational opportunities to reach our shared goal of vital, visible and viable libraries for the future.
- Provide the Board and membership with ongoing evaluation regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of Association activities, programs, and services. Plan, organize, and direct ongoing membership promotion and retention programs and membership activities. Support the Executive Board and enable it to work effectively.
- Support the work of the Council, the offices and boards of the ALA's divisions and roundtables, committee chairs, sponsors, exhibitors, and program participants in the development of plans and programs for Association conferences and similar activities.
- Coordinate, guide, and integrate the activities of the ALA units, including divisions and roundtables, with the ALA mission, goals and priorities.
- **Financial Oversight**
 - Oversee, manage, and expand the financial assets and affairs of the Association, which currently include a large operating budget from multiple sources, a growing endowment, and ALA owned real estate.
 - Coordinate the preparation, approval, and presentation of financial plans, annual budgets, audits, etc. Ensure that appropriate accounting practices are followed and that all necessary financial and budgetary records are maintained within each ALA unit.
 - Work with the Board, the Council, the ALA Endowment Trustees, the ALA Development Office and other individual units of the Association to develop additional sources of revenue for the Association. Direct the ALA Development Office's fundraising activities in support of the Association's mission and goals and support the fundraising efforts of ALA's constituent units. Advance the goals of the organization through well planned, diverse development activities.

➤ **Representing ALA**

- Promote the image and position of ALA by partnering with the ALA President and representing the Association. Establish and maintain effective relationships with other related or affiliated organizations in the library and information science world and beyond.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING ALA AND THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As people across the library community have been asked about the future, the core response has been consistent. Libraries and library-related work are changing rapidly and will continue to evolve as communities change, as technology changes options. For those who work in the library world, there are both opportunities and challenges. How, then, does ALA need to change in order “to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all”?

To do this important work for libraries and, ultimately, for all the diverse populations they serve, it is essential that ALA continue to innovate, grow, and focus on its mission and members who, working with staff, enable us to achieve critical goals. It also means ALA must be financially and operationally strong, nourish strong collaborations internally and externally, and be able to focus resources, including the valuable work of ALA members and staff, on work that moves the Association forward toward shared goals. That work – the work of change – is embodied in a series of multi-year projects we have described as our “streams of change.”

STREAMS OF CHANGE

➤ **Investment Budget / ALA Headquarters Building**

The approved FY2019 budget begins a 3-year investment cycle designed to build capacity in critical infrastructure areas (information technology), in revenue growth (Development), and in a core mission-forward activity (advocacy). During this period, ALA will utilize its strong financial position to improve operational capacity and businesses to sustain the growth of the Association following this investment cycle.

At their Fall 2017 (FY2018) meeting, the ALA Executive Board and Management discussed a package of forward steps including internal reorganization, various revenue growth strategies, and strategic use of a portion of ALA's net assets. As part of that process, the Board authorized Management to engage a commercial real estate firm to examine the "highest and best use" of ALA's real estate in Chicago, based on both investment and ongoing operational needs of the Association. Based on responses to an RFP, Cushman and Wakefield was retained and reported to the ALA Executive Board at the 2018 Annual Conference.

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. ALA has 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. At the end of that period, approximately the end of May 2019, ALA will know the outcome of the proposed sale transaction.

Concurrently, ALA management has engaged the services of an architect and a change management specialist to begin a parallel process of reviewing options for a new workspace and understanding how ALA can use this opportunity to improve its culture of innovation and collaboration. ALA is 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, ALA could potentially be looking at a move by the end of calendar 2019. If ALA moves, the Association believes that it will be in a better position to succeed and lead in the future. If there is no move, ALA is confident the current analysis and assessment will still serve the Association well as we go forward.

Members have asked how proceeds from a potential sale would be used. Essentially, ALA is seeking to convert a real estate asset to an endowment asset, where it will generate additional operating revenue for the Association and its various programs. While some of the proceeds will be used in the move itself,

most of the proceeds will be invested in the ALA endowment.

➤ **Organizational Effectiveness and Governance Review**

At the 2018 Midwinter Meeting in Denver, the Board issued a call for ALA Council, Committees, Round Tables, Divisions and the myriad Communities of Practice to consider what it would take to align ALA's organizational structure, policies, and rules with the Association's mission and its 21st century values, key action areas and strategic directions.

A Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) was charged "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 overall effort is led by an executive team including ALA Past President Jim Neal, ALA President-elect Wanda Brown, SCOE Chair Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, and ALA Executive Director Mary Ghikas. External support is provided by Paul Meyer and Jim Meffert of Tecker International, a consulting firm retained by ALA management to facilitate the organizational effectiveness study. At the recent 2019 Midwinter Meeting, informed by feedback from ALA members over the years and a series of phone interviews conducted by Tecker International, members discussed what is/is not working, drivers of change, and broad concepts for a possible future. Discussions will continue at the 2019 ALA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.

➤ **Membership and Communications Study**

In spring 2018, ALA contracted with Avenue M, a Chicago-based consulting firm, to conduct communications and membership studies, with the goal of improving services for and communication with members. A series of questions were posed that are relevant to current discussions:

On Membership

- What are the barriers that may prevent individuals from joining ALA?
- Are there membership models that might better respond to the needs of current and prospective members?
- How might we improve or increase member engagement?

On Communications

- How do we refresh and refocus our message framework?
- How do we focus individual communications to avoid “over-communicating” with members – a frequent member complaint?
- How might we more effectively coordinate and collaborate across the Association – again, to avoid “over-communicating” and confusion?

In July 2018, a survey of ALA members, as well as former members, was conducted. The purpose of the study was to better understand the interests, needs and motivations of current and former members, as well as some individuals in the field who have never been ALA members. The survey was delivered to 65,152 individual email addresses, with responses received from 10,386 (16%).

Top-level survey results have been shared with SCOE and are helping to inform their discussions on organizational effectiveness. Survey results relevant to conferences were also shared with the ALA Conference Committee, to help them in their discussion of Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting changes. Among the “top-level” results were the following:

- ALA members are drawn to ALA because they see the Association as an advocate for the profession.
- While 49% of members responding were satisfied with their ALA membership, only another 8% were extremely satisfied. That suggests that the current focus on rethinking ALA for a changing world is both timely and worth the effort being invested by member leaders and staff.
- Two-thirds of ALA members pay their own membership dues.
- The most widely-utilized ALA benefits include *American Libraries* magazine, ALA Annual Conference, AL Direct, ALA eLearning and ALA Standards and Guidelines.
- The number one professional challenge reported was keeping up-to-date with new trends and developments in the field.

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. Implementation of communications recommendations is being led by a newly-reorganized Communications and Marketing Office, with initial investment recommendations expected with the FY2020 budget. Implementation of membership recommendations is being led by the ALA Membership Office (Director search underway), working with ALA Divisions and other units.

All recommendations are being coordinated with work underway on ALA organizational review (SCOE) and ALA internal changes (including IT assessment).

➤ **Internal Changes and IT Assessment**

Internal assessment and realignment are also needed in order to allocate essential staff resources to critical areas, to support changing workflows and changing member needs, and to take best advantage of new approaches and new opportunities in critical support and mission areas. Internal changes to date are “neutral”; that is, they assume no particular outcome to the Organizational Effectiveness/Governance Review. Overall, increased simplicity and clarity is assumed.

While IT is an area of major investment, the combination of ALA’s complexity and rapidly changing technology strongly suggested the need for an external assessment. In summer 2018, management contracted with DelCor, an IT consulting firm whose practice is based in associations and other

nonprofits, to conduct an assessment of ALA IT. Consultants have delivered recommendations based on their initial consultancy and next steps are being reviewed. An interim Chief Information Officer (CIO) has been retained through DelCor. An audit of ALA digital assets will be completed in 2019, on contract with DelCor.

➤ **Aligning Advocacy – Stronger Chapter/State Relationships**

Working closely with Chapters and other State Associations (e.g., AASL Affiliates, ACRL Chapters and others) ALA will build a national network of key library advocates. To provide a strong resource base for this network, ALA has brought together advocacy resources in both the Washington Office and Chicago headquarters, under the director of Washington Office. ALA is also enhancing technology support, piloting an application of Salesforce.

- The national network will build on -- and more effectively utilize -- ALA's most significant strength: a national membership reaching into communities of all sizes and characteristics.
- The national network will ground advocacy in community-based relationships and knowledge, and also magnify that impact through the network and through national communications.
- It recognizes that while we are bound together by essential values and a fundamental belief in the importance of libraries and library people, libraries themselves are rooted in a local community – academic, civic, school or corporate.
- Basing a national advocacy network structure firmly on a local base is an approach to stability and sustainability in an unstable world. It strengthens focus on local relationships, provides a solid foundation for national advocacy and strengthens libraries, beginning at the local level and reaching to the national level.

➤ **ALA Midwinter Meeting**

Over the past two years, the ALA Conference Committee has discussed options to (a) change Midwinter, (b) eliminate Midwinter or (c) eliminate the present Midwinter but replace with an alternative event. At Mid-Winter 2019, in Seattle, the ALA Conference Committee led discussions and obtained feedback on a proposal to replace the current Midwinter Meeting with an alternative event.

The proposed event – as yet unnamed – would be strongly focused on content in two areas:

- Leadership, Strategy & the Future, building on the successful Symposium of the Center for the Future of Libraries, currently offered in conjunction with the ALA Midwinter Meeting. It will address both topics (or *what* to know) and skills (or *how* to know).
- Building on the strength of the Youth Media Awards, the Andrew Carnegie Medal Announcements and similar events, a second strand would focus on books, literacy, multimedia collections and services to children, teens and adults.

In addition:

- Key governance groups and content will occupy separate times, enabling leadership to participate with other members in important discussion on future trends, directions and concerns.
- Session formats will include information sessions, interactive workshops and “campfire” discussions.
- Exhibits will continue to play a major role, with changes in format still under discussion.
- Initial implementation of planned for January 2021, in Indianapolis, and January 2022, in San Antonio.

➤ **QUALIFICATIONS**

ALA seeks a dynamic, innovative, entrepreneurial, and experienced leader as its next Executive Director. A Bachelor’s degree is required. An advanced degree is strongly preferred. An ALA accredited Master’s Degree or a CAEP accredited Master’s Degree with a specialty in School Library Media is preferred.

The following qualifications represent the broad set of experience, knowledge, and personal attributes deemed important for success in this role.

➤ **Experience**

- Demonstrated successful, senior management level experience managing a complex organization, leading strategic planning, and implementing significant organizational change. Experience managing in a rapidly changing environment is critical.
- Successful experience balancing the business and nonprofit, mission-driven sides of an organization. Must have a record of prior involvement in professional association activities, preferably in the area of library and information science.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising.
- Proven track record providing strong and capable leadership in managing change; recommending, developing and implementing policy and programs; and mediating or resolving issues among membership, staff, and others.
- Demonstrated diplomacy and consensus-building experience among diverse constituencies, such as governing bodies, staff, members, and external partners.
- Cross-cultural experience and sensitivity.
- A record of achievement and demonstrated leadership skills managing a variety of functions and programs involving volunteers and professional staff.
- Demonstrated ability to work effectively with a governing board, including the ability to adapt to an elected leadership that changes on an annual basis.
- Evidence of financial and business sophistication in managing an organization or a significant part of a large organization with multiple funding sources.
- Knowledge of external stakeholders with whom ALA engages including public officials, the media, and community and business leaders.
- Demonstrated proactive experience in promoting diversity and inclusion and working effectively with a diverse workforce and/or population.

➤ **Knowledge**

- Based on his/her knowledge and experience, take a leadership role in articulating and seeking to advance the interest of libraries and librarianship. Able to demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing libraries and librarianship at the local,

state, national and international levels.

- Deep understanding of and commitment to equitable access to information and intellectual freedom.
- Strong business and financial acumen.
- Demonstrated understanding of established and emerging technologies and their applications to information access and delivery to the Association and to its members. Must also understand the policy implications of new technologies and how they affect libraries, intellectual freedom, and access to information. Comfortable and experienced with the use of technology, including social media, to accomplish the mission and goals of an organization.

➤ **Professional and Personal Attributes**

- Enthusiasm for the mission and goals of the American Library Association.
- A visionary who can convert vision into strategy and then into concrete action steps.
- Willingness to listen and learn coupled with a sense of urgency and a bias toward action.
- Effective outreach and presentation skills to enhance public perception of libraries of all types and to position the Association externally as a credible and influential advocate. Interest in the external dimension of the role and in developing partnerships and initiatives with other organizations.
- Strong sense of accountability; highest levels of personal and professional integrity.
- Outstanding communication skills with an ability to listen, speak extemporaneously with a variety of audiences, and inspire others.
- A management philosophy that emphasizes participation, inclusion, collaboration, consensus building, trust, transparency, and results.
- Approachability; ability to connect effectively with a highly diverse set of stakeholders and partners.
- Intellectual curiosity
- Adaptability; high tolerance for complexity, change, uncertainty and ambiguity.
- Good judgment and maturity; high emotional intelligence.
- High energy, dynamic, optimistic.
- Strategic, creative, and has the ability to promote innovation in others.
- Candid, authentic, healthy ego, ability to manage stress with grace and resilience; a sense of

humor.

- Willingness and ability to travel approximately 35% annually, including international travel.

ALA offers a competitive salary based on experience. ALA offers a comprehensive and valuable benefits package that includes generous paid vacation and retirement annuity.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Evaluation of prospective candidates will begin immediately. Applications and nominations should be sent to: <http://www.imsearch.com/searches/details/content/S6-242> . For best consideration, please submit application materials by XXXXXX

Inquiries and referrals should be addressed to:

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