**<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/basic-guide-ALA-council>**

**Basic Guide to the ALA Council**

The ALA Council Orientation Committee has prepared this basic guide to the ALA Council for newly elected and re-elected Councilors and their mentors, drawn from information on the official ALA website.

This guide is divided into five sections: | [About ALA](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/basic-guide-ALA-council#about) | [ALA Governance and Policy Documents on the ALA Website](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/basic-guide-ALA-council#governance) | [Council Information on the ALA Website](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/basic-guide-ALA-council#information) | [ALA Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/basic-guide-ALA-council#executive) | [Some Committees with Charges Directly Related to ALA Governance and Council](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/basic-guide-ALA-council#committees) |

**About ALA**

[**About ALA**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/) provides an overview of the American Library Association, including ALA’s Mission Statement, Core Values, eight Key Action Areas, strategic directions and governance.

The [**ALA Online Handbook of Organization**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/handbook), update following each Annual Conference, provides information on ALA’s structure, membership groups, and governing bodies.

Information about [**ALA Strategic Planning**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/strategicplan), including a history of ALA strategic planning.

ALA’s current [**Strategic Directions**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2017_annual/cd_35_3_revised_ala_strategic_plan.docx) document, adopted by Council on June 28, 2015, revised 2017.

Information about[**ALA Legal Guidelines**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/legalguidelines), includes the following sections: A factsheet describing how ALA's nonprofit status affects lobbying activities; Guidelines governing ALA and political elections; A description of ALA's tax designation; and a FAQ regarding ALA's legal framework:

ALA issues an [**Annual Report**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/annualreport)to provide information about ALA’s accomplishments in the past year.  Includes the Annual Reports for the current and prior years.

**ALA Governance and Policy Documents on the ALA Website**

ALA’s governance activities are shaped and guided by a series of governance and policy documents.

The Association’s first official document was the [**Charter of 1897**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/charter-1879-revised-1942), which was revised in 1942.

ALA’s Constitution and Bylaws are approved by the ALA Council and voted by the membership.

The ALA [**Constitution**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/constitution) is a brief but basic ALA governance document: Article VI defines the roles and responsibilities of Council; Article VII relates to the Executive Board; and Article VIII deals with the ALA Officers and Committees:

Section VI, Council. Section 1.a.-b. of the ALA Constitution relating to Council reads:

1. The Council of the American Library Association shall be the governing body of the Association. The Council shall delegate to the several divisions of the Association authority to plan and carry out programs and activities within assigned fields of responsibility and in accord with general Council policy.
2. The Council shall determine all policies of the Association, and its decisions shall be binding upon the Association, except as provided in Section 4.c. of this Article.

The twelve articles of the ALA[**By-Laws**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/constitution/bylaws) cover these areas: Membership; Meeting; Nominations and Elections; Council; Chapters; Divisions; Round Tables; Committees; Finances; Notices by Mail; Voting by Mail; and Parliamentary Authority.

The ALA [**Policy Manual**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual) provides statements of policies, arranged by topic, adopted by the ALA Council:

The ALA [**Policy Reference File**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/prf)(PRF) contains the full text of policies deemed too long to be in the Policy Manual.  The Policy Reference File contains interpretations, process documents, the original Council Document that presented the Policy, and other policy-related miscellany. Many policies in the Policy Manual contain explicit reference to material in the Policy Reference File, but many do not. The digitalization of the paper Policy Reference File was completed by ALA staff in the spring of 2009.  Here is the link to the [Policy Reference File](https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/635) at the ALA Institutional Repository.

**Council Information on the ALA Website**

[**Welcome Letter to New & Re-elected Councilors**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/welcome-letter-councilors)**:**This up-to-date welcome letter from the Council Orientation Committee provides basic information needed by new and re-elected Councilors.

[**Council Composition and Charge**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council):  An overview of the Council’s composition and charge.

[**Council Roster**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/council-roster)**:**The Current official Council Roster, maintained by the Council Secretariat, contains the names, email address, term ending date and photo (if provided by the Councilor) for all current Councilors.   The Roster provides an additional listing of At-Large Councilors; a listing of Chapter Councilors alphabetized by chapter; Division and Round-Table Councilors alphabetized by Division and by Round Table; an Executive Board roster; and a roster of Officers of Council.

[**ALA Chapter Councilors**](http://www.ala.org/groups/affiliates/chapters/chaptercouncilor/chaptercouncilor): Information and resources for Chapter Councilors.

[**Duties of Councilors**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/alaelection/2009/2009election/council_job_descript.pdf) (PDF):  A “job description” for ALA Councilor.

[**Council Audio Recordings**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/councilaudio):  Links to recordings of the 2010-2015 Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting Council Sessions, Council/Executive Board/Membership Information Sessions and the 2015 Annual Conference Council Orientation Session.

[**Council Actions, 2008-current year**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/council_actions)**:** Documents listing of actions taken by the Council from 2008 to the current year are provided here. For Council actions in prior years, please contact the Council Secretariat, Lois Ann Gregory-Wood.

[**Council Agendas, 2008-current year**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/council_agendas)**:**Agendas from all Council meetings from 2008 to the current year are provided here.  For Council agendas in prior years, please contact the Council Secretariat, Lois Ann Gregory-Wood.

[**Council Attendance and Voting, 2008-current year**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/attendance_voting/vote_tally2004_2011)**:** The attendance record and voting tally of Council members at Council meetings from 2008 to the current year are provided here.  Closing debate and housekeeping motions, plus some actions which were approved by acclamation, do not appear in the voting tally.

[**Committee Information Update Report, 2008-current year**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/cmte_info_report)**:**ALA and Council committees are required to submit an update report of their activities within one month after each Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference.  The committee reports from 2008 to the current year.

[**Council Committees, Charges and Membership**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/council_committees)**:**Appointments to the fifteen committees of Council are made by the Council Committee on Committees, in cooperation with the ALA president-elect who, as chair of the Committee on Committees, appoints the chairpersons of Council committees.  Links to the fifteen Council committee pages.

[**Council Documents, 2008-current year**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/council-documents): Inventories of Council Document at Council meetings, including Resolutions, Tributes, Memorials, and Committee Reports.  For Council Documents prior to 2008, please contact the Council Secretariat, Lois Ann Gregory-Wood.

[**Council Meeting Calendar, 2017-2024**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/meeting_calendar)**:** A calendar of the Council Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference meetings scheduled through 2024.

[**Council Minutes**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/minutes)**:**Official minutes of the 2008 – current year Council meetings at the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference.

[**Council Reports**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/division_council_reports)**:**The 2008- current year Annual Conference Division Reports to Council.

[**Guidelines for Preparation of ALA Resolutions**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council/resolution_guidelines)**:** Guidelines for preparation of resolutions for the ALA Council and Membership, as well as mutual content documents (i.e., resolution samples, resolution forms, etc.), as well as sample resolutions.

**ALA Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance**

The [**ALA Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/office) provide support to and facilitate the work of the Association and all its members, and specifically offer direct service and assistance to the ALA President, President-Elect, the ALA Executive Board, the ALA Council and the ALA Executive Director. The official webpage for the ALA Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance, including a list of services provided by the Office.

The current [**ALA Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance Staff**](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/officers/executive_office_staff/excutiveofficestaff) are listed here.

**Some Committees with Charges Directly Related to ALA Governance and Council**

These ALA committees have committee charges directly related to ALA governance and Council.

The charge of the[**Constitution and Bylaws Committee**](http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-constby)is to consider amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws; to review and draft rules for the conduct of Council and membership meetings; to review and draft rules for the preparation of resolutions, memorials, and tributes; and to make recommendations to the Association in accordance with the provisions of articles xi and xii of the Constitution.

The charge of the [**Council Orientation Committee**](http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-cnclorient) is to develop and carry out a mentoring and orientation program for new and continuing councilors and to manage the council suite or lounge at the Midwinter Meeting and at the Annual Conference.

The charge of the [**Policy Monitoring Committee**](http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-polmonit) is to monitor the accurate documentation and codification of ALA policy, as determined by formal action of Council; to prepare additions or changes in the ALA Policy Manual following each Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting, as may be required by motions and resolutions adopted by Council; to review and advise on all unit organization policies to ensure that they are in compliance with Council approved association-wide policies; to provide oversight by review prior to publication of the written text and Policy Manual numbers prepared by ALA staff and report to Council the accomplishment of Council's directives; to be responsible for keeping the Policy Manual accurate and up to date and to call Council's attention to outdated items to be retired from the Manual or gaps in the presentation of policies.

The [**Resolutions Committee**](http://www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-resolution)provides an advisory and channeling function for all resolutions presented for council's consideration, reviewing all resolutions submitted to council pursuant to the criteria established by council. The committee is also directed to provide consistent, in-depth training for all new members.

The Committee’s webpage provides information about resources, guidelines and forms, a sample resolution and the Committee’s table schedule at ALA meetings.