ALA 2021 Midwinter Meeting (Virtual)
Intellectual Freedom Round Table Councilor’s Report

Here is my report on Council activities during the ALA Midwinter Meeting. Before launching into the descriptions of each meeting, I will also note that there were virtual Council sessions in [September](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%202.1%20September%20Virtual%20Council%20Meeting%20Minutes.pdf) (focused on the budget) and [December](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%202.2%20December%20Virtual%20Council%20Meeting%20Minutes.pdf) (focused on the Forward Together process), so please review the minutes for details.

# Council/Executive Board/Membership Information Session

This session does not have any action items, but is an opportunity for ALA officers and staff to share reports. The meeting started with reports from [ALA President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2021%20Presidents%20Report_Midwinter%202021_0.pdf). and [ALA President-Elect Patty Wong](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2029%20President-Elect%20MW%20Jan%202021.pdf). There was a question about ALA’s advocacy on behalf of front-line library workers being considered essential workers and getting higher priority for COVID-19 vaccination. It was noted that it is really a local issue, but that individual libraries are taking action to advocate on behalf of their workers and that ALA has some resources related to this topic on the website. [ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2023%20Executive%20Director%20Report%202021%20Midwinter.pdf) then gave her report, using her remarks to focus on the ALA Pivot Strategy, which will also be discussed in more detail at Council II. Nominating Committee chair Candice Wing-yee Mack gave her [committee’s report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2026%20Nominating%20Committee%20Report.pdf) detailing candidates for the 2021 ALA Elections. There was a question about why three candidates were nominated by the committee instead of the usual two. The answer was that the committee wanted the membership to have a wide range of options for leadership during these difficult times. There were no petition candidates for President and three petition candidates for ALA Councilor at Large.

Peter Hepburn, chair of the Budget Analysis and Review Committee, gave his [committee’s report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2033%20BARC%20Rpt%20Council%20MW21_.pdf), focusing on how the delay of receiving financial information has changed the committee’s workflow for the year and made it impossible to give the usual updates on how the Association’s budget is doing, though the initial data show a negative trend. He also reviewed the changes in the Annual Estimates of Income projected at the Annual 2020 Conference and the same projection from Fall 2020, which shows a $10 million decrease in ALA net assets and a $2 million decrease in budgeted revenue. ALA Treasurer Maggie Farrell then gave her [report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2013%20Treasurer%20Report%20Council%20Membership%20MW%2021.pdf), noting that there is a projected $824K deficit for FY 21, but that $1.2 million in funding from the Paycheck Protection Program and an Economic Injury Disaster Loan for $150K will result in a $523K surplus at the end of the year. Though there are still furlough days planned for ALA staff, they will be monitoring the budget closely to see if those furloughs can be reduced. There’s a lot of detail in the treasurer’s report, so I would encourage you to read it if you want to see the exact figures from across the association. Maggie noted that the programmatic priorities are now called the planning and budget objectives, which will be discussed in greater detail at Council III.

Pat Wand, Senior Endowment Trustee, gave the [endowment trustee report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2016%20Endowment%20Trustees%20Report%20MW21%20Final%20I_0.pdf), noting the impact of the murder of George Floyd and the invasion of the U.S. Capitol on economic conditions. The current market value of the endowment (12/31/2020) is just over $60 million while the book value is at $15.8 million. The trustees took action to rebalance the portfolio when the proportion of value in equities had exceeded the target due to the growth of the stock market and reinvested the funds in fixed income assets. There was a question about funds under management with the Blackstone Group, which will require more time to answer.

Returning to some questions for the Treasurer that had been waiting for an answer while the endowment trustees report was happening, Maggie reported that the audit of FY 20 will be completed by June 2021. There were a number of questions about a contingency payment of $4.5 million connected to the sale of the former ALA headquarters that depends on how the building is redeveloped. Due to the slowdown in the Chicago redevelopment market, the building redevelopment has also stalled, but they are monitoring the situation to make sure we get the contingency if a new qualifying building project is started within the negotiated time period (as I understand it, if the redevelopment either doesn’t meet the criteria for the type of use that would trigger the contingency or if the building sits vacant for a certain amount of time, then we do not get that additional payment).

Executive Director Hall reported that there are 7,012 registrations for this Midwinter event against a goal of 5,000, and this includes a record number of student registrations.

# ALA-APA Council

As the ALA Council is also the governing body for the ALA Allied Professional Association, there is a brief business meeting at each conference. We are approaching the 20th anniversary of first the library staff certification program in June and the founding of ALA-APA next January, so there will be programs celebrating these milestones. Though the budgeted revenue targets for FY 20 will likely fall a little short, revenues are still exceeding expenses, so that’s good news. The FY 21 budget projects a small ($10K) net revenue. The full reports from the [executive director](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA_APA%20CD%205%20Associate%20Executive%20Director%27s%20Report%20MW%202021.pdf) and [treasurer](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA_APA%20CD%204.0-4.1%20%20FY20%20Years%20End%20Results%20MW%202021.ppt) are available for your review.

# Council I

Please note that all Council documents are available on the [ALA website](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/annual-and-midwinter-2021), so I will not link every report, but will link those that I think are of particular interest. The meeting opened with the standard action items of adopting the council rules, reviewing the agenda, and approving the minutes from the June, September, and December virtual meetings. All were approved with unanimous consent. ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall reported on the [actions of the ALA Executive Board](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2015%20Review%20of%20Board%20Action%20since%202020%20June%20AC.pdf) since the 2020 June Virtual Meeting and the [implementation of 2020 Virtual Meeting Council Actions](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%209%20Implementation%20of%20Virtual%20Council%20Actions.pdf). [Nominees for the ALA Executive Board](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2011%20Report%20of%20the%20ALA%20Council%20Committee%20on%20Committees-Executive%20Board%20Election%202021-2024.pdf) were announced (see the report for the 6 original nominees), with one additional nominee (Kari Mitchell, a furloughed public librarian) made from the floor. The Tellers Committee was appointed and instructions for voting were reviewed. Mike Marlin, chair of the Resolutions Committee, presented his report of the [committee’s recent activities](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2010.1%20Resolutions%20Committee%20Report%20MW%202021.pdf) and noted that resolutions can now be submitted at any point during the year. After a short break, the rest of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the final report from the [Forward Together Working Group](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2035%20Forward%20Together%20Working%20Group%20Final%20Report.pdf), along with updates from the [Forward Together Fiscal Analysis Working Group](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2037%20Forward%20Together%20Fiscal%20Analysis%20Workgroup%20Report%20MW%202021.pdf) and the announcement of the [Forward Together Resolutions Working Group](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2035a%20FT%20Resolutions%20WG%20Roster.pdf) (of which I am a part). I would encourage you to read these reports on the Forward Together process and to share your thoughts with me as the Resolutions Working Group begins its work. The main Forward Together Working Group co-chairs gave a presentation with the following findings:

* clear support for changing the name of the Executive Board to the Board of Directors and for increasing its size from the proposed 17, though there is not consensus on how big the board should be
* there is little shared understanding of what member engagement means
* there was a lot of support for adding committees on intellectual freedom and core values
* some support for longer terms for committee membership
* round table existence should not be based on membership numbers alone
* round tables should have a shared or unified governance document; the Round Table Coordinating Assembly is already working on a template and should be invited to Council to present when it’s ready
* not much consensus on the future of Council
* need to know more about how Assemblies would communicate, if they would have board representation, and whether they would have any policy-making authority
* the working group’s scope did not include ALA-APA or divisions, but these groups should be engaged going forward

The Fiscal Analysis Working Group will continue to operate, analyzing the fiscal implications of proposals made by the Resolutions Working Group.

Questions/comments raised in the discussion:

* When will we get some clarity about the role of assemblies? Now it’s up to the Resolutions Working Group to make proposals about the assemblies to bring back to Council.
* There was a theoretical proposal to shrink Council that would keep the breadth of representation, but with fewer representatives in each category.
* Question about school librarians being represented on the Resolutions Working Group (president says yes, but it’s unclear who)
* The Resolutions Working Group will be making recommendations to bring to Council
* Questions about the cost implications of increasing the size of the Board and whether that’s tied to the dissolution of Council
* The Resolutions Working Group will present recommendations in groups of topics, not as a omnibus proposal.
* Concerns about any positions on the Board being appointed, not elected
* Assemblies should be represented on the Board
* Cost savings did not drive the start of this reorganization discussion
* We need to remember that member engagement should be a focus of this work
* What are the connections between Forward Together and the ALA Pivot Strategy? We’ll discuss more at Council II
* A suggestion that Council should stop delegating the work to working groups and should take up the challenge of making actual proposals of how to make changes to the organization
* Lots of comments about the need to move forward and start doing the work.
* The Constitutional Convention is still scheduled for this spring, but I’m still a little confused about the timing of when all these resolutions that have yet to be written will come to Council.

I’ll have more to report once the Resolutions Working Group gets started.

Tracie Hall reported that we are up to 7,012 registrants (slight increase from yesterday’s numbers and reviewed some of the highlights of upcoming programs.

# Council II

After reviewing virtual meeting and voting logistics, President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr. called the meeting to order. The agenda was revised to include one resolution (to be discussed below), while another resolution that was to have been added was withdrawn with the potential of it coming back for Council III. We voted to approve the amended agenda by unanimous consent. Jim Neal, chair of the [Committee on Organization](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2027%20Committee%20on%20Organization_action.pdf), brought five action items for consideration by Council (please see the linked report for details on the action items):

1. Establishment of a Council Committee on Sustainability (approved; 159 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain)
2. Discontinue the Library Education Assembly (approved; 157 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain)
3. Discontinue the Exhibits Round Table (approved; 159 yes, 3 no, 2 abstain)
4. Endorse the creation of the Exhibits Advisory Group (approved; 160 yes, 3 no, 1 abstain)
5. Change the charge of the ALA Election Committee (approved; 162 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain)

The next report was from Joe Thompson, chair of the [Committee on Legislation](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2020-20.2%20Committee%20on%20Legislation_action_0.pdf). The Legislative Agenda is included in the report, so I would encourage you to take a look at it. There was one action item: a Resolution to Support Broadband as a Human Right (endorsed by the IFRT board and IFC among others). This resolution was approved (168 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain).

We then received two reports from special (i.e., non-Council) groups: the [Freedom to Read Foundation](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2022%20Freedom%20to%20Read%20Foundation%20Report_MW%202021.pdf) and the [Philanthropy Advisory Group](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2034%20Philanthrophy%20Advisory%20Group_MW%202021.pdf). The FTRF report will be of great interest to IFRT members, as it includes the latest updates on legal cases related to free expression as well as summaries of emerging issues. The FTRF report also includes information on their new task force on intellectual freedom and social justice. The Philanthropy Advisory Group report has minimal information, so I’ll note that the presentation focused on the group’s mission to raise money for ALA, what it means to cultivate a culture of philanthropy within ALA, and how we need to connect philanthropy to the ALA Pivot Strategy (to be discussed later in this session, though it looks like we might have less time for that later discussion since we’re already running 30 minutes behind the timings on the agenda).

The next action item was discussion of the [Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2043%20Resolution%20to%20Condemn%20White%20Supremacy%20and%20Fascism%20as%20Antithetical%20to%20Library%20Work%20Final_0.pdf). Both the IFRT Board and the IFC endorsed this resolution. After a long discussion, with all speakers giving support (and a few questions along the way about what pushback we might receive, as well as some discussion about needing definitions for some terminology), the resolution was approved (160 yes, 4 no, 2 abstain). As I’m on one of the working groups named in the resolution, I’ll be able to provide updates as we work on this.

After a break, we returned with 30 minutes to discuss the [ALA 5-Year Pivot Strategy](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2036%20ALA%205-Year%20Pivot%20Stretgy%20Update.pdf). We didn’t have much time for discussion after the presentation, and I encourage you to look through the strategy document. ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall also announced the revival of [the ALA Business Advisory Group](http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2021/01/ala-executive-director-names-13-leaders-ala-business-advisory-group) to assist with ALA business development. Final registration numbers will be presented at tomorrow’s Council III. Following the Council meeting was the forum for Executive Board candidates, which I had to skip due to a meeting with my boss.

# Council III

After reviewing virtual meeting and voting logistics, President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr. called the meeting to order. The agenda was revised to include two resolutions (to be discussed below). We voted to approve the amended agenda by unanimous consent. We then recognized the people being honored by memorial and tribute resolutions (all resolutions available on the [Council Documents](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/annual-and-midwinter-2021) page).

The results of the Executive Board results were announced, with Christina Rodrigues, Ana Elisa de Campos Salles, and Sam Helmick elected to join the board after the 2021 Annual Conference. Ismail Abdullahi, chair of the International Relations Committee, presented the committee’s [report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2018%20International%20Relations%20Committee%20Report%20to%20Council%20MW21.pdf) (there were no action items). Martin Garnar (that’s me!), chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, then followed with his committee’s [report](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2019%20Intellectual%20Freedom%20Committee.pdf), including two action items. The Resolution in Opposition to Facial Recognition Software in Libraries (in the [separate report of action items](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2019.1-19.3%20Intellectual%20Freedom%20Ccommittee%20MW%2021_action.pdf)) was discussed at length. The resolution was amended by removing the 5th clause regarding transmitting the resolution to Congress (vote to amend: 156 yes, 9 no, 0 abstain) and ultimately adopted as amended (vote to amend: 149 yes, 4 no, 3 abstain). The Resolution on the Misuse of Behavioral Data Surveillance in Libraries (also in the linked report of action items) was also discussed at length. An amendment to modify the final resolved clause to specifically mention privacy audits was defeated (vote to amend: 66 yes, 90 no, 4 abstain), with IFC Privacy Subcommittee Chair Erin Berman being allowed to speak against the motion. The resolution was adopted as originally submitted (vote to adopt: 156 yes, 2 no, 2 abstain). Chairs Abdullahi and Garnar then returned to the virtual podium to present a joint report on the U.S. Media Corporations resolution working group, noting that while progress has been made on a new draft, the working group needs more time. Like the resolutions, the working group statement is in the report of action items.

After Council agreed to extend the time of the meeting, Treasurer Maggie Farrell presented the [FY 22 Budget Objectives](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2013.1%20Budget%20Objectives%20and%20Programmatic%20Priorities%20MW21_0.pdf). Council voted to concur with the Executive Board and approve them (161 yes, 1 no, 0 abstain). Maggie then presented the [Operating Agreement Working Group update](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2040%20Operating%20Agreement%20Work%20Group%20Update.pdf), but since we were pressed for time because the IFC chair took up SO MUCH TIME with his resolutions, it was a short update. Please refer to the linked report for the details.

The [Resolution on replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal aliens" with "Undocumented immigrants"](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2044%20Final%20Revision%20Resolution%20on%20replacing%20the%20Library%20of%20Congress%20Subject%20Heading%20_Illegal%20aliens_%20with%20_Undocumented%20immigrants_.pdf) was next on the agenda. Those speaking against it referred to the 2016 resolution on the same topic, suggesting that we did not need to take up the topic again when we are already on record in support. Brian Stearns, the chair of the CORE Subject Analysis Committee, noted that his committee was not consulted even though it’s directed to take action in the resolution. After some discussion, there was a motion to withdraw the resolution to be reevaluated at Annual 2021 after consulting with the CORE committee named above. The motion to withdraw was approved by general consent – no formal vote was required.

The [Resolution to Classify Library Workers as 1b Workers to be Listed as a Priority Workforce in Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/ALA%20CD%2045%20Resolution%20to%20Classify%20Library%20Workers%20as%201b%20Workers%20to%20be%20Listed%20as%20a%20Priority%20Workforce%20in%20Receiving%20the%20COVID-19%20Vaccine%20Final.pdf) was the final resolution under discussion. We had to extend time once again shortly after the resolution was introduced, as there’s still some business to do after the resolutions. An amendment was proposed to completely replace the resolved clauses with new ones that would encourage libraries to share success stories about getting library workers reclassified, supporting library workers to receive the vaccine as soon as possible, and to refer the resolution to the Committee on Legislation, Committee on Library Advocacy, and the Chapter Relations Committee with a report. The amendment passed (vote to amend: 87 yes, 60 no, 8 abstain). Another resolved clause was added by consent (no vote needed) affirming that library workers have a right to a safe workplace. The twice-amended resolution was adopted (vote to adopt: 149 yes, 4 no, 2 abstain).

We extended the session one more time (now over an hour later than planned), but first took a break since we hadn’t stopped in 3 hours. We returned in closed session to vote on an ALA Honorary Membership, which is a confidential process. After we returned to open session, ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall made some final announcements, including a breakdown of registrants. We had 7,121 registrants, including 2,016 student attendees. President Jefferson adjourned the meeting.