**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**FROM:** Larry Deutsch, Communications Manager, ldeutsch@ala.org

**RE:** Communications Report

**DATE:** October 11, 2018

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:** Report

**OVERVIEW**

PLA’s communications work during the past quarter has focused primarily on the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan (described in separate report, #2019.11), Individual Giving Campaign/Fund For the Future, Fostering Creative Community Connections project, and documenting departmental policies, procedures and plans.

**KEY CURRENT ACTIVITIES/METRICS**

The following activities related to this project have been completed to date:

* In July, PLA released a [free promotional toolkit](http://ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/family-engagement-toolkit) for its [Family Engagement Initiative](http://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/familyengagement). This resource is designed to help raise awareness of family engagement through libraries. PLA partnered with the ALA Communications & Marketing Office to develop the toolkit and design the materials contained therein.
* After conducting a survey of PLA members and stakeholders on the association’s communication practices and analyzing the survey’s results, the communications manager presented this information, along with recommendations for improvements to policies and procedures, to PLA staff on Aug. 9. The main 7 recommendations were:
	+ End the practice of sending initiative-specific e-newsletters to all members, even during an initiative’s launch period. Instead, include teaser information about the initiative in the monthly *PLA e-News*, encouraging readers to opt in to the initiative-specific e-newsletters and/or join its corresponding Interest Group on ALA Connect. In addition to conforming with the wishes of PLA members, this course of action is more in line with email marketing best practices. *(implemented)*
	+ Establish a practice of having the staff person responsible for each core initiative submit at least one content item for publication in each month’s edition of *PLA e-News*. Newer or less well-known initiatives will be intentionally stacked above the more established ones, when feasible. This practice will help even the balance of coverage across all initiatives and reduce the need to “force-feed” content pertinent to newer initiatives through dedicated all-member emails. *(being discussed for to determine feasibility)*
	+ Establish a policy of only sharing information on behalf of outside organizations – including other ALA units – if the product, service, or program is offered free of charge. This action is intended to reduce the overall amount of content that could be viewed as “up-sells,” so that the only paid programs and services readers are exposed to are our own. *(policy drafted, awaiting approval)*
	+ Leverage the Member Library on the new ALA Connect as a repository for back issues of PLA e-newsletters as well as electronic editions of *Public Libraries* magazine. This practice will allow us to link directly from *PLA e-News* or other channels to online versions of the initiative-specific e-newsletters so potential subscribers can be more easily exposed to the content. *(implemented)*
	+ Work with ALA ITTS to add dynamic content pods to select pages on the PLA website that will stream the three most recent Member News Releases or blog posts matched by topic tag. This practice is already in place on [PLA’s ALA Connect home page](https://connect.ala.org/pla/home). This would help ensure that visitors to PLA’s website receive the most up-to-date information on its core initiatives without creating an administrative burden on the web communications manager – asking him to constantly monitor the initiative pages to remove information on past events or outdated calls to action. *(currently aspirational – will require buy-in from ALA ITTS and greater understanding of our web platform’s limitations)*
	+ Integrate LinkedIn into PLA’s regularly used social media channels, especially to facilitate networking connections in and around the conference. This item will be considered in tandem with a future review of PLA’s social media presence. *(on hold until review of social media completed)*
	+ Meet with PLA staff to brainstorm ways to cultivate more content in the requested areas, including national trends in public libraries, library success stories, best practices, and programming ideas. It should be acknowledged, however, that collecting content from member libraries (library success stories and individual member news) would present a significant administrative burden and could cause the amount of content PLA publishes to balloon out of control. *(gathering input to determine feasibility)*
* In the wake of numerous ALA crises, including over the Meeting Rooms Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights* and challenges to Drag Queen Story Times nationwide, a basic plan was drafted to guide how PLA responds to crisis situations. We will continue to build upon and refine the plan over the coming months.
* Numerous communications were created around the PLA Fund for the Future and Individual Giving Campaign, including articles for *Public Libraries* magazine, a collection of testimonials from contributors and beneficiaries, and donor-appeal letters customized for several target audiences.
* Staff researched and compiled ideas for commemorating and leveraging PLA’s 75th Anniversary in 2019, then sought input from all staff on desired outcomes, feasibility of implementation, and next steps. Some of the ideas include:
	+ Replace the existing logo with a 75th Anniversary version on all PLA websites, social media pages, presentation templates, for the duration of 2019
	+ Order various “swag” items bearing the 75th Anniversary logo (pens, notepads, coffee mugs, etc.) and distribute them at conferences throughout 2019
	+ Host a Special 75th Anniversary Reception at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference
	+ Publicize the 75th Anniversary, PLA’s recognition plans and opportunities to get involved throughout 2019, including through press releases, monthly updates in *PLA e-News* and a Special Anniversary Edition of *Public Libraries* magazine
	+ Leverage the 75th Anniversary for membership recruitment/engagement and for fundraising/revenue purposes
* Staff provided support for the PLA president’s presentation, which was given at the Life After LIFE International Forum in Antalya, Turkey, October 2. This included the content for a 15-minute speech and accompanying Power Point slides created to increase awareness of PLA’s activities in the international library community.
* Staff provided support for the [Fostering Creative Community Connections](http://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/shortstorydispensers) project and its [Short Fiction Writing Contest](https://short-edition.com/en/contest/set-stories-free-2018) by helping with press releases, promotional materials for libraries, and outreach to writers’ groups.

**BUDGET**

Funds for staff time and resources were spent to accomplish this work and we are on-budget for these.

**ASSESSMENT**Since its last report to the PLA board, submitted on June 4, PLA has issued 15 press releases, ten electronic newsletters, and numerous other communication pieces. PLA’s main social media channels continue to perform well based on key performance indicators. We have gained 626 new followers on Twitter and 284 on Facebook while generating 247,700 content impressions on Twitter and 106,776 on Facebook, over the period from June 4 to October 10.

**PLA STRATEGIC GOAL LINK (check all that apply)**

[ ]  TRANSFORMATION [ ]  LEADERSHIP [x]  ADV. & AWARENESS [ ]  E.D.I.S.J. [x]  ORG. EXCELLENCE