Report to MLA Executive Board for February 2017 meeting

From: Ruth Urell, ALA Chapter Councilor

Date: February 13, 2017

Re: ALA Mid-winter, Atlanta, January 2017

I’m attaching my rough notes from ALA Council sessions, and attempting to attach relevant documents to various sessions as much as possible.

I hope all this makes sense and you will find some useful pieces of information or thinking included - we did a lot of careful consideration, talked about core values in lively forum exchanges and during Chapter Councilor sessions, and listened closely to each other to understand subtle - and glaring - variations and shadings in our common ground and differences and similarities in shared experiences in our library lives.

Please note that all this is rough draft notes in an attempt to capture the spirit of many many hours of working meetings and background.

At council session 1, we participated in a Town Hall discussion, basically on “core values”, somewhat as an outcome of the kerfluffl :) around the time of the presidential election when there were differing messages coming from ALA Wash DC office and ALA Pres. Julie Todaro. I believe councilors were generally happy to have an opportunity to express themselves about their ideas about where librarians quasi-officially can/should stand in a challenging time of uncertainty and I simply jotted down some of the remarks made at the microphones during this moderated session at the close of Council 1. People differ quite a bit in what they think is “appropriate” or the right thing to do and ultimately, this was a good chance to hear and pay attention to a very wide range of positions. I’m attaching the ALA Code of Ethics which may be a useful document here.

At council session 2, the ALA Exec Board presented a question about whether Council wanted to reconsider the M.L.S. REQUIREMENT for hiring a new ALA Exec Director. There was a lot of discussion of the question - several years ago Council had made it a requirement therefore it would take a vote of current councilors to change it to “preferred.” After well over an hour of well-presented pros and cons, the vote was to keep it a requirement - 78 to 75.

Council session 2 also heard a report from the Conference Committee about their recommendations for a “redesign” of annual conference - basically to shrink the number of meeting rooms and re-think some of the concurrent sessions that generate low-attendance and require large space commitments. This was the subject of an entire evening forum as a number of people on various ALA committees and representing sections - eg., ASCLA, LAMA, etc. - felt that the Conf Cmte had proceeded to make some changes without sufficient input or broad representation. I don’t think many of us who attend regularly will notice too much change, and I’m attaching preliminary documentation that is still being worked out. If you’re interested in this, I can try to drill a little deeper and find more information. (I think a fair amount of this is necessity-budget driven - and also accessibility driven - as you know, some locations at conference are so remote that you have to give up an entire half-day of programs to attend a single session, etc.)

Also on the Council session 2 docket was the budget/plan of service presentation that included adding a fourth “strategic direction” to our plan - as an outcome of several years of work by diversity & inclusion task force/working groups/committees. Unanimously approved. Draft language attend fyi.

Council session 2 concluded with statements from the candidates for exec board and a good Q & A session.

Council 3 - we probably did the most debating and heard some pretty interesting and in-depth reports from committees. Several items attached - including Intellectual Freedom report, resolution on gun violence, etc. The reports have explanatory intros for the most part, I’d be happy to expand if you wish.

I think that’s it - Thanks for reading :) and thanks for your kind trust to allow me the great privilege to try to represent Massachusetts librarians in this vast nation of so many views and voices.

Ruth