

ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCE REMODEL: FAQ (14 January 2017) (updated 22 January 2017)

On December 14, 2016, following preparation and discussion by the ALA Conference Committee, a ALA Conference Remodel Proposal was posted to ALA Connect (ALA Conference Committee) for member comment. Many comments and questions have been received. The summary and FAQ following are based both on the original proposal and on the subsequent questions and comments from members.

During the 2017 Midwinter Meeting, the Conference Committee received additional feedback and was able to meet with a number of individual members and groups. Some modifications were made to the “remodel” plan.

ALA CONFERENCE COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

- A more manageable & easily navigable Annual Conference.
- Reduced campus size in response to extensive member feedback.
- Clearly articulated content streams, bringing together both programs and peer-to-peer learning (e.g., discussion/interest groups) to provide the best-possible conference for attendees.
- Reduced schedule conflict between sessions on the same topic.
- Increased sustainability, both financial and environmental.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE REMODEL PROPOSAL

- An approximately 45% decrease in the number of assignable rooms for programs, discussion groups, meetings and all other conference activities. For all groups and all kinds of events, this means that communication and flexibility will be required.
- One-hour sessions: 9-10, 10:30-11:30, 1-2, 2:30-3:30, 4-5, with the option to start at 8:30 rather than 9 (resulting in an 8:30-10.00 session) or to extend to 5:30 (resulting in a 4-5:30 session).
- Centrally-controlled, flat space utilization. Additional rooms will not be available for historical “peak” periods. The room inventory will be consistent from Friday through Tuesday.
- Convention Center space priority for programs, then discussion groups.
- Standard room sets.

- A central, open submission site for all Annual Conference Program submissions.
- Contributed programs - either from groups or individuals - will be juried.
- Juries will have a common rubric (which is not subject specific), a common timetable and a common assessment framework.
- There will also be curated series, with specific requirements.
- All program submissions and all discussion/interest groups submissions will be tagged for general subject area, to enable attendees to find both programs and peer-to-peer learning on a topic.
- In general, business meetings will be scheduled in hotel meeting space or in convention center meeting space on Friday, in late afternoon time periods Saturday-Sunday, on Monday afternoon or Tuesday. *Conference Services is looking at the potential costs & trade-offs needed to expand wifi access in hotel meeting rooms.*
- *The Conference Committee is committed to conference-wide, program-level evaluation. Evaluation will be on the Committee's 2017 Annual Conference agenda.*
- *The Committee was also able to more fully develop the concept of an enhanced series of Presidents'/Chairs' programs - including ALA, its Divisions and Round Tables, as well as, based on their interest, affiliates.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED

- **How many juries are proposed and how are they constituted:**
 - 15 Juries are proposed: 1 for each Division, an ALA jury (Round Tables, ALA Committees/Offices, Chapters, Affiliates), an Exhibitor jury (exhibitor-related programs), a Poster Sessions jury, and an IGNITE (short format) session jury. Fourteen of the 15 proposed juries exist currently.
 - The following composition is proposed for the ALA jury:
 - 5 Round Tables representatives (selected through the Round Tables Coordinating Assembly) *This was increased from 3, based on discussion with RT leaders.*
 - 2 ALA Committee/Office representatives (collaborative process to be defined)
 - 1 Affiliate representative selected through the ODLOS Advisory Committee
 - 1 person from the membership of the ALA Conference Committee

- To increase system efficiency a standard maximum size for a jury is proposed; the current recommendation is 10.

- **On what basis will juries assess proposals?**
 - The ALA Conference Committee has been reviewing a draft set of review guidelines and will approve a final recommendation at the 2017 Midwinter Meeting. Review guidelines will be assessed after each conference cycle, to support continuous improvement.
 - The proposed criteria are based on criteria currently used by one or more ALA Divisions for division national conferences or ALA conference programs.
 - The current proposal recommends 8 criteria for assessing program proposals:
 - Does the program description clearly, with sufficient detail, outline the proposed presentation?
 - Who is the target audience and why would this session be relevant to them?
 - Is the topic timely, new and/or in demand?
 - Does the content offer fresh, memorable ideas, methods or resources?
 - Are learning outcomes (takeaways) clear, specific and actionable?
 - Is the proposed presentation likely to engage participants actively in discussion, thought or active learning?
 - *How does this program advance discussion and learning related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion?*
 - *How does this program advance one or more of the other strategic directions of the Association: Advocacy, Information Policy, Professional and Leadership Development?*
 - [Speaker: Have you seen this presented present a program? If so, please rate.] *This has been deleted, based on Committee discussion.*
 - Panel: Does the proposal demonstrate how the perspectives of 2-4 presenters will be brought into a cohesive conversation/dialogue - rather than multiple, unrelated presentations?
 - The review criteria will be adapted for juries that are specialized by format (e.g., poster sessions, IGNITE! sessions). The IGNITE! jury process includes a public voting process.

- **How many programs will each group select?**
 - Each jury will select up to a defined number of programs. That number will be based on historical information about the number of programs from that group; the number will be less than the historical average, but will be inclusive of programs in “curated” streams (e.g., President’s/Chair’s programs)
 - The number of programs juried by the ALA jury will be based on the combined number of programs historically offered by Round Tables, ALA Committee/ Offices and Affiliates.
 - Juries will have significant latitude.
 - A jury may “hold back” 1 or more program slot, to allow for late opportunities or emerging issues.
 - A jury should select 1 or more “alternate” program, in case a selected program must be cancelled.
 - A jury may choose - based on topic, format or other criteria - to allow two program slots for a single program. That program then counts for two programs out of the total allowable.
 - A jury may set aside one or more program slot for a “solicited” program when it feels a critical content area has not been addressed by submissions.
 - All contributed programs will be scheduled in the convention center and all will be digitally captured, subject to a rights agreement with the presenter(s).

- **Who can submit a program proposal?**
 - Anyone. A group or an individual.
 - Collaboration is encouraged, particularly collaborations that may bring diversity of perspective to an issue or topic. *Internal or External collaboration will provide “extra points” in jury consideration.*
 - A group or individual submitting a proposal will specify the jury for which the proposal is intended. Only one jury may be specified.
 - Each proposal must be tagged to at least one content area.
 - A proposal will not include a specific day/time requirement; it may include a “do not conflict with _____” note.

- **What is the proposed timetable?**
 - The initial “remodel” is proposed for the 2018 ALA Annual Conference (New Orleans).
 - The Submission Site will open in late April 2017 and close in mid-August.
 - Juries will complete their work by late September.
 - The ALA Conference Committee will work with ALA Conference Services in October-November to (a) review scheduling for undesirable conflicts, (b) review curated content streams and (c) determine if there are major gaps (i.e., a critical current issue not address by the program) that should be addressed.
 - Preliminary program information will be available when Annual Conference registration opens.

- **How will content “buckets” or streams be identified.**
 - The ALA Conference Committee, which is representative in its structure, will develop content streams in consultation with groups across the Association.
 - The unique “affordance” of the ALA Annual Conference is that it brings together content from a complex and diverse field, across all types of libraries, to people in many different career stages. This has significant value and must be maintained.

NOTE: *Based on extended discussion at the Conference Committee meeting, individuals and groups will be asked to “tag” proposals, based on a broad list of subject tags, with the option to enter a unique term under “other.” The Conference Committee, in the process of structuring the final program (sequence) to provide maximum clarity and coherence for attendees as well as minimal conflict between programs on the same topic, will create content “streams” based on the programs and discussion/interest groups actually being offered.*

- **What are “curated” series?**
 - “Curated” series are unjuried but must meet specific organizational criteria. Each operates within defined limits (number of programs, size of programs, etc.)
 - All curated program series will be in the convention center and all will be digitally captured, subject to rights agreements with the presenter(s). [Auditorium Series programs are frequently not recorded.]
 - The current “curated” series are:
 - The “Auditorium Series” programs are selected from among major authors proposed by their publishers. ALA Conference Services works with the ALA Conference Committee on this series. Programs are expected to fill a 1,000+ seat auditorium.
 - The News You Can Use series includes updates/briefings on new research, legislation or regulation. By their nature, they tend to be late. A limited amount of space is set aside for these sessions. They are expected to fill a 200+ seat room.
 - The President’s/Chair’s Programs are developed by individual Divisions, Round Tables, Affiliates - up to one/unit or group. [Programs are expected to fill a 300-500 capacity room, with some exceeding 500.] *This requirement was deleted, based on discussion with Round Table representatives. Presidents’/Chairs’ programs may fit a variety of room sizes, based on the audience anticipated by the sponsoring group.*

- **Are there other unjuried programs?**
 - Most Divisions and some Round Tables and ALA Committees/Offices offer “101” or orientation programs. These may be scheduled outside of the convention center and are not recorded.
 - The ALA/JobLIST Placement Center offers career development sessions. These are offered in the Placement Center. By policy, individuals are not required to register to use Placement Center resources. These sessions are not recorded.
 - Various ALA Exhibits Stages. The “Stages” offer authors and other presenters. The “Stages” are curated by ALA Conference Services. This content is offered in a less formal setting. “Stages” content is not recorded.

- **How will Discussion Groups fit into the new structure?**

- Discussion Groups (also including Interest Groups, Member Initiative Groups, etc.) represent valuable opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning. They have central position, along with programs, in the conference remodel.
 - Discussion Groups will not be “juried.”
 - Discussion Groups will be subject to the normal limitations of available space/ time. A 2nd Discussion Group space request from the same group - before all requesting groups have been scheduled - may be frowned upon.
 - Groups/individuals entering a Discussion Group must tag the session with one or more subject term. Note that the subject tag(s) for a Discussion Group may vary from conference to conference, depending on the anticipated focus of the group at that conference.
 - Discussion Groups may offer entirely informal peer-to-peer learning (discussion); they may offer formal presentation. They may offer a blend of formal and informal learning.
 - Discussion Groups will not be digitally captured.
 - Discussion Groups will be scheduled in the convention center to the extent that space allows; they will be scheduled in hotel spaces as necessary.
- **How will Round Tables be represented in this remodeled structure?**
 - While ALA Round Tables have not historically done a high volume of programming, they represent significant content areas and member concerns within the Association.
 - A Round Table may choose to offer a President’s/Chair’s Program; a Round Table (or a member of a Round Table) may submit a proposal to the ALA or any other jury; some Round Tables regularly have “update” content (e.g., information on new legislation) that may fit into the curated News You Can Use series.
 - Because of the nature of Round Tables - often issue-focused - it would be reasonable for a Round Table to submit a space request for a Discussion Group Session, e.g., Intellectual Freedom Round Table Discussion Group. One “discussion group” session for each of the 20 Round Tables has been tentatively assumed.
- **What about program evaluation?**
 - The ALA Conference Committee is committed to implementing consistent evaluation on all programs across the Association.

- Again, as it did in developing guidelines for jury consideration, the ALA Conference Committee will start with the evaluation forms/processes used by ALA Divisions and other groups within the Association.
- Because of the volume of other agenda items at this Midwinter, a decision on evaluation form will be made at the 2016 ALA Annual Conference.
- In addition to post-conference evaluation by attendees, it is also important to know who many people attended various sessions. Session sponsors will be asked to provide that information.

- **What about Pre-Conferences and Pre-Conference Tours? What about ticketed events like banquets?**
 - Pre-Conferences and Pre-Conference Tours have not been discussed by the Committee as part of this remodel. They will continue as they have been.
 - The same for ticketed events such as banquets.

- **How do Committees and other business meetings fit into this new structure?**
 - Well, in some respects, this is the trickiest issue to address.
 - Historically, the largest single block of activity (i.e., number of sessions in a category) are committee and other business meetings.
 - In addition to being a numerically large group, committee are also complex to deal with because (a) many take 2 (or more) program “slots,” (b) many have highly unusual room arrangements, and (c) committees may meet individually or in “all-committee” combined sessions.
 - Historically, ALA members have tended to belong to multiple committees/ boards - creating personal arrays of meeting conflicts.]
 - Committee members often articulate a conflict between the need to meet with their committee(s) and a desire to attend relevant programs or discussion groups.
 - The ALA Conference Committee is looking at several approaches to scheduling committee meetings - and a decision is anticipated by late winter.
 - Possibilities being considered:
 - Completely Centralized scheduling
 - Scheduling by group: e.g., a Division or a cluster of smaller groups would be allocated a block of space/time to allocate.
 - Some combination of the two options above.
 - The ALA Council remains scheduled as it currently is, both in terms of time and room arrangement, generally in the convention center.
 - A cluster of rooms (hotel space, in a Board set, has been tentatively set aside for Boards (ALA, Division, Round Table).
 - A small number of rooms will designated for ALA’s famous “hollow square + audience” set. Groups absolutely requiring that set will be asked to work together to allocate the space.

- All other rooms will be set in rounds, so provide the greatest flexibility. (Rounds can be used for meetings, discussion groups or programs.)
 - And yes, ALA Conference Services is looking at the options (and cost impact) of providing increased access of wifi in hotel meeting rooms.
 - *A “flex-room” will be set aside - set with multiple round tables - for “pop-up” meetings, to promote flexibility and encourage interaction.*
- **Will the Conference Remodel have a (positive) impact on site selection options?**
 - Quite possibly. One of the factors that distinguished ALA - not necessarily in a positive way - among association conferences is its current demand for 350+ meeting rooms concurrently. The remodel proposal reduces that to 200 rooms concurrently - somewhat better.
 - Note that a 200 room starting inventory results in a net of about 100 assignable rooms. There are many reasons for that, including the way hotels count/divide rooms (think of those rooms with airwalls) and the need to set aside spaces for things like AV storage.
 - And, getting back to site selection, there are many other factors that impact site selection: hotel inventory, airline lift, state laws, local price structure, etc.
- **Were there other issues/questions raised in the feedback?**
 - Yes.
 - Here are the topics in the ALA Conference Committee’s or ALA Conference Services “Parking Lot”:
 - Mailing badges
 - Printed programs
 - A virtual conference
 - More virtual participation in the face-to-face conference
 - Midwinter
- **In case I want to participate, where/when does the ALA Conference Committee meet at the 2017 Midwinter Meeting?**

Saturday, January 21, 8:30-11:30am, GWCC B218.