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IRRT Councilor Update

By *Sandy Hirsch*
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Have you ever wondered what happens at ALA Council meetings and what your IRRT Councilor does to represent IRRT at these meetings? I am serving my second 3-year term as IRRT's Councilor. This new column reports on some of the major topics addressed at ALA Council meetings at the 2019 ALA Midwinter meeting in Seattle, and how your IRRT Councilor represents IRRT interests.

Many of the issues that are addressed by ALA Council do not have a direct connection to IRRT's international focus. However, as a Council member, I participate actively in all of the matters that come before Council.

Here are a few highlights from the 2019 ALA Midwinter Council meetings.

ALA is engaging in a number of "streams of change" to modernize, streamline, and improve the way it works. Leaders of these efforts presented to Council.

⇒ The ALA Conference Committee, chaired by Clara Bohrer, has been investigating ways that ALA might change ALA's midwinter meetings ([CD#39](#)). Three options were considered: eliminate midwinter; tweak midwinter; or eliminate and replace midwinter with something new. The committee is exploring further the third option: to reformulate midwinter. In particular, it is looking to move midwinter away from focusing on business and instead focusing on professional development, curated content, and awards/media celebrations. Midwinter meeting changes would be implemented in 2021 Indianapolis.

⇒ Council also heard from Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, chair of the ALA Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE). SCOE is working to align ALA's organizational structure, policies and rules with the association's values, key action areas and strategic directions. After hearing an update on what work has been completed so far, Council engaged in a discussion about how ALA could be remodeled, particularly focusing on what a remodeled Executive Board and a remodeled Council could look like.

⇒ ALA Treasurer, Susan H. Hildreth, shared that the ALA headquarters real estate may be sold and the headquarters may be moved to a different site in downtown Chicago. Most of the proceeds from the sale of the headquarters would be used to create an

What does the IRRT Councilor do?

- Participate as an active member of the IRRT Executive Committee
- Solicit input from IRRT Executive Committee on key votes that will take place during ALA Council meetings
- Attend ALA Council meetings
- Share daily updates with the IRRT Executive Committee about what happened during each ALA Council meeting

Our Councilor is our direct voice to ALA Council

endowment to generate additional operating monies for the ALA.

⇒ ALA Past President Courtney Young is chairing the ALA Executive Director Search Committee. She discussed the next steps in the search ([CD#34](#)). An election was held to fill the ALA Council slots on the search committee; Susan Jennings and Peter Hepburn were elected.

Several important resolutions were approved by ALA Council including:

- ◇ Changing the language used in ALA Policy B.8.10 "Addressing Poverty, Economic Inequality, and the Responsibilities of Libraries" so that the language is more inclusive ([CD#14](#)); for example, one of the big changes was changing language from "poor people" to "people experiencing poverty."
- ◇ Adopting sustainability as a core value of librarianship ([CD#37](#)).
- ◇ Changing the Lemony Snicket Prize for Noble Librarians Faced with Adversity to the Penguin Random House Library Award for Innovation through Adversity ([CD#31](#)); the award recognizes U.S. libraries and staff who overcome adversity and create lasting innovative community service programs that successfully inspire and connect with new readers.
- ◇ Eliminating Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Justice ([CD#38](#)).
- ◇ Adopting "In support of Civil Rights Protections for People of Diverse Gender Identities" ([CD#41](#)).
- ◇ Adopting "Copyright: An interpretation of the code of ethics" ([CD#24.1](#)).

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- ◇ Adopting revisions to three Library Bill of Rights interpretations and one article that were presented by the chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, Julia M. Warga.
- ◆ Library Bill of Rights, Article VII ([CD#19.1](#))
- ◆ Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights ([CD#19.2](#))
- ◆ Prisoners' Right to Read: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights ([CD#19.3](#))
- ◆ Challenged Resources: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights ([CD#19.4](#))

We heard many committee reports, including one from past-IRRT chair Robin Kear who is now the chair of the [International Relations Committee](#). She reported that 162 international librarians from 24 countries attended ALA Midwinter.

At the start of the third ALA Council meeting, ALA Council held a very long discussion about a Code of

Conduct complaint regarding an incident that occurred at a Council Forum meeting. Council Forum typically meets three times during the annual and midwinter meetings and is intended to allow councilors an opportunity to get feedback and discuss issues before introducing them more formally at a ALA Council meeting. Voting only occurs at ALA Council meetings. The incident is being investigated. ALA Executive Board released a [statement about this incident](#).

You can read more about what happened at ALA Midwinter (including the actions that Council took place) here: <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2019/02/05/2019-midwinter-wrap-up/>.

I enjoy serving as your IRRT Councilor. If you have any questions, please reach out to me through the IRRT Executive Committee.

Volunteers Needed for the International Visitors Center

Do you like meeting new people from all over the world?

Do you speak multiple languages?

Do you have some time to give during Annual?

The IRRT [International Visitors Center](#) Committee has a great opportunity for you!

We're looking for volunteers to help staff the center during ALA Annual, as well as help with new initiatives this year.

The International Visitors Center provides a place for conference attendees from outside the U.S. to rest, use computers, and get information about conference events. Volunteers are needed to greet visitors, offer assistance, and keep the center running smoothly.

The committee this year is also planning the following initiatives and will be seeking volunteers for them as well:

- ⇒ A "conference buddy" program to match an ALA member who has been to at least one annual conference with an international attendee to help answer any questions they may have and be a support throughout their time at the conference.

- ⇒ Visits to the Library of Congress and African American and Native American Museums.
- ⇒ A list for visitors of words for common food allergens translated into other languages

More details will be sent as the conference gets closer, so if you'd like to help, please be on the lookout. For more information, please contact Katie Spires at mkspires@gmail.com.

