

Final Report of the ALA Task Force to Explore Online Deliberation and Voting

January 2020

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Background

The ALA Task Force on Online Council Deliberation and Voting was formed to address concerns with the process both technical and procedural of two recent online votes of Council.

Those votes were:

ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Question: "Should the educational qualification for the ALA Executive Director be amended to make an ALA-aLA-5 1h7(i)11.5993-2.53658(b)-5.07317h7(i)11.5993O07194.28247(L)-5.07194(A)-4.2

Question: To rescind the adoption of the revised Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (2017-2018 ALA CD#19.6_62617_act)

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Summary of Recent Task Force Activities

This follow-up Report is an addition to our previous report presented at ALA Annual 2019 in Washington, DC. This Task Force report includes completed research in three areas: online meeting software, constitution and bylaws review, and Council disposition to online deliberation and voting.

ONLINE MEETING SOFTWARE

To begin, the Task Force conducted a review of online meeting software licensed by ALA for the purposes of collaboration, meetings, and voting. The four packages include Zoom, ALA Connect, SBS real time event voting, and Webex.

Evaluation Criteria included the ability to meet the legal, administrative and technical requirements of conducting deliberation and voting in the ALA Council and other deliberative bodies of ALA. General legal and administrative requirements include, but are not limited to: capacity to support *ob rts u s o r r*, advanced notice (at least 10 days), a presiding officer present, the establishment of a quorum, an official record of deliberation and votes taken, as well as a mechanism for reporting actions taken to the wider ALA membership. Technical requirements include overall usability and accessibility, the capacity to manage synchronous and asynchronous communications, tools for creating, distributing, counting and recording ballots, as well as the management of online deliberation including activities such as submitting and passing resolutions, amendments and other work routinely undertaken in face-to-face meetings of the ALA Council.

Results: Zoom and WebEx provide many features conducive to synchronous communications including sharing screens and documents, voiceovers, hand raising and chat features, and shared audio, but has more limited balloting features. SBS real time event voting is still under development, but does offer a potential solution for synchronous voting, although synchronous deliberation in detail remains problematic. The ALA Connect Workspace Module's balloting feature permits asynchronous votes to be taken, recorded and results distributed, but does not facilitate synchronous voting or deliberation.

Key Takeaways:

1. As per previous recommendations of the Task Force, more recent testing reinforces that ALA Connect supports informal asynchronous voting but not the formal deliberations and synchronous voting required for many activities in ALA Council.
2. Recommendation to continue to monitor and track improvements in SBS software relevant to synchronous voting and deliberation.
3. Subject to additional trials and testing: using a combination of software products, particularly WebEx or Zoom that facilitate synchronous communication and deliberation in conjunction with specialized voting software offered by SBS could provide a workable system to support online deliberation and voting.

CONSTITUTION & BYLAW REVIEW

At the 2019 Annual Conference, the Task Force sent proposed changes to the ALA Bylaws to

Article VI, Section 3.

“Seventy-five voting members of the Council shall constitute a quorum **for a meeting, whether held in person or electronically.**”

Article VI, Section 4.b.

“Any question of policy may, by a majority vote of Council, be submitted to the Association to be voted upon either at a membership meeting or by mail **or electronic means as the Council may determine.**”

Article VI, Section 4.c.

“Any action of the Council may be set aside by a majority vote by mail **or by electronic means** in which one-fourth (25%) of the members of the Association have voted. Such vote by mail **or electronic means** shall be held upon petition of one percent of the personal members as certified by the Executive Director of the Association.

Article VIII, Section 2a.

“subject to a mail **or electronic** vote by Council.”

Article VIII, Section 2b.

“subject to a mail **or electronic** vote by Council.

ALA Bylaws

Article II. Meetings

Section 5. Votes by Mail **or Electronic Means**

c. For votes by Council, **75** [strike: fifty percent of the voting membership] voting

to make it easier for practices and models to be ed

Council Participation Beyond Midwinter and Annual

The survey had conflicting responses regarding Council participation beyond Midwinter and Annual. The chart below shows that only 3% of the respondents agreed with the statement that Council should not meet online, and 85% of respondents indicated a willingness to attend additional, online meetings at least two times per calendar year. However, the highest scatter in the survey was for the statement in Question 5, "Council meeting 10 hours per year in two face-to-face sessions meets the policy and governance needs of ALA." While the highest response in this question was "somewhat disagree" (29%), this question also had the highest percentage (23%) of respondents with no opinion, and no response was under 10%.

Question	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
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Council
meeting 10
hours per
year in two
face-to-face
sessions
meets the
policy and
governance

Comfortable with officer votes or discussion online, but believe that face to face meeting is still necessary - 4 Concerns about going to only virtual meetings (value in face to face)

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“Online meetings should be supplemental - it is important for people to be able to

change; who battled winter storms, and wildfires, and balanced other ALA responsibilities, those that come with our day jobs, and of course family, with the demands of our charge. Please join me in commending the members of this Task Force for their untiring effort, leadership, and resilience. Thank you!

Submitted by:

Ed Sanchez, Chair

Micki Dietrich, Chapter Councilor

Ed Garcia, Executive Board Representative

Peter Hepburn, BARC Representative

Ben Hunter, Constitution and Bylaws Committee Representative

Steve Matthews, Chair ALA Constitution and Bylaws Committee

Marie Pyko, Chapter Councilor, Member of Resolutions Committee

Karen G. Schneider, Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) Representative

George Stachokas, Chair Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC)

Bill Sudduth, Member of COO and Resolutions Committee

Sheryl Reyes, Staff Liaison

Marsha Burgess, Staff Liaison

Eli Mina, Advisor (ALA Parliamentarian)