

**2010-2011 ALA CD#21.1
2010-2011 ALA MMD#7
2011 ALA Annual Conference**

**American Library Association
2011 Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA
Report of Roberta Stevens, President**

It has been an honor to be the 2010-2011 president of the American Library Association. I appreciate the support I received during my term from so many people within and outside of the association. The time passed in the proverbial "blink of an eye."

This year was an intense one, dominated by federal and local budgetary woes. Financial challenges were compounded by national and technological developments that affected libraries and the people who work in them. While I used to describe the situation as a "perfect storm," I've begun to use the latest buzz phrase, "the new normal." Whatever term is employed, what's clear is that libraries are not likely to return to annual increases in funding levels anytime soon. The troubling economic circumstances have required us to reexamine what we do and how we do it. Libraries "get it" and are making adjustments to deal with fiscal constraints, while striving to keep services and operations up-to-date and responsive to their customers.

If ever there was a critical moment for focusing on strong advocacy programs, sharpened messaging, and providing "value," it's now. We cannot take for granted that libraries will be held in unquestioning reverence. Most of my media interviews have included the question "Why do we need libraries in the age of the Internet with everything online?" Doubts about major public institutions are being expressed even as libraries have millions pouring through their doors on a daily basis. In addition, a noticeable degree of cynicism has become a constant thread in the political discourse. This is ultimately a matter of even greater concern.

The library landscape of the past twelve months reflected the seismic changes occurring in our economy, educational systems, and government. Issues that arose reflected the "paradigm shift" underway globally with stagnant or decreased funding at the federal, state and local levels; the tragic closures of school libraries; increased interest in privatizing public libraries; attacks on the right of state employees to collectively bargain; and limitations on e-book access. The latter dramatically highlighted the potential long-term effects of licensing versus owning electronic content and questions that had been long brewing about the role of libraries in the digital age.

When I campaigned for president, I pledged to devote myself full-time to the duties of this role. I have done so. In fact, being president turned out to be much more than an eight-hour a day job. While demanding, it was also energizing to work with so many ALA members and staff dedicated to having the best libraries in the world. I am grateful for this extraordinary opportunity.

As president, I am pleased to provide my final report to the Executive Board and Council.

Presidential Initiatives

Our Authors, Our Advocates recruited twelve popular authors to speak out for libraries through public service announcements that can be downloaded to the websites of libraries throughout the nation. At my inauguration, Carmen Agra Deedy, Sharon Draper and Brad Meltzer spoke passionately and entertainingly about what libraries meant to them. They were joined by other author advocates this year, including David Baldacci, Judy Blume, Neil Gaiman, Sara Paretsky, Jerry Pinkney, Kathy Reichs, Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scott Turow and Mo Willems. Brad, Scott and Pam also prepared op eds in support of libraries for print and online newspapers/news sources. Finally, audio PSAs were produced with Laurie Halse Anderson, M.T. Anderson, Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi.

With so many authors appearing at every Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, we have an ongoing opportunity to advance this rich set of resources for library advocacy. I thank Maureen Sullivan, Peggy Barber and Pat Tumulty for conceptualizing the initiative's direction with me and Marci Merola, Macey Morales, Mark Gould, JoAnne Kempf and the ALA staff who made the outline blossom into "the real thing." Our Authors, Our Advocates PSAs are available at www.ilovelibraries.org/ourauthorsouradvocates.

As a spin-off to "authors as advocates," the **Cultivating Your Local Notables** online toolkit was produced. It guides libraries in developing well-known local figures or celebrities into library advocates. Marci Merola led the project, and the Neal-Schuman Foundation graciously provided financial support. The toolkit is available through ALA's Advocacy University at www.ala.org/localnotables.

As part of improving advocacy tools, "**Library Quotes**," the database of quotations from authors, politicians, historical figures, celebrities and journalists on the ilovelibraries website, was revised. This was a joint effort by the Office of Library Advocacy and ALTAFF.

ALA's Graphics produced an **Our Authors, Our Advocates poster**, featuring photos of the participating authors and their quotes. It is available for sale in the ALA Store here at the conference.

Peter Pearson and his team did a terrific job on the **Frontline Fundraising** online toolkit, now available in pdf, html and flipbook versions on the Issues & Advocacy section of the ALA site. The toolkit allows libraries, with little or no previous experience, to reach out successfully to potential donors. Thanks also go to Kim Olsen-Clark and ALA's Development Office and IT staff for getting the toolkit into final form.

Experimenting with social media and building a younger contingent of library advocates drove the **“Why I Need My Library” Contest** of teen-created YouTube videos in the 13-15 and 16-18 age groups. Substantial cash prizes were awarded with the requirement that they be donated to the winners’ school or local public library. We crossed our fingers hoping for a healthy number of entries and, in fact, received nearly 160 of them! Links to the winning videos and runners up are available through www.ilovelibraries.org/whyneedmylibrary. The grand-prize winners will be shown at the Opening General Session on June 24. Paula Brehm-Heeger, Diane Chen, Marci Merola, Megan Humphrey and the contest team are to be congratulated for their accomplishments in pushing Why I Need My Library through to a successful conclusion.

Task Forces

Agendas for the Board and Council meetings will include reports from:

- 1) Former ALA President Jim Rettig, chair of the **Council Effectiveness Task Force**,
- 2) Annelle Huggins, chair of the **Chapter Relations Task Force**,
- 3) Brett Bonfield, chair of the **Future Perfect: Envisioning ALA’s Governance in the 21st Century Task Force**, and
- 4) Linda Crowe and Michael Porter, co-chairs of the **Equitable Access to Electronic Content Task Force**.

John Moorman, chair of the **ALA Policy Manual Revision Task Force**, will be giving a brief update of their work at the conclusion of his Policy Monitoring Committee presentation during Council II.

Interviews

The following is a listing of print and nonprint interviews since my last presidential report to Council at the ALA Midwinter Meeting. Please note that travel limited my availability, and Audra Caplan, president of the Public Library Association, often stepped in on my behalf. Thank you, Audra!

The State of America’s Libraries (Including How Budget Cuts Are Affecting Libraries Nationwide):

- KPBS-FM with Hank Crook, January 4
- KPBS-TV with Gloria Penner, January 7
- KPBS-FM with Ana Tintocalis, January 7
- The Gazette with Mark Hartsell, January 18
- The Sacramento Bee with Jack Chang, February 9
- Epoch Times with Pamela Tsia, February 18
- New Orleans Clear Channel Radio with Ray Romero, June 15
- KPBS-FM with Maureen Cavanaugh, June 20

The Privatization of Libraries:

- The Independent (UK newspaper) with Kunal Dutta, February 11

E-Books:

- USA Today with Bob Minzesheimer, March 4
- Minnesota Public Radio with Suzanne Pekow, March 9
- The New York Times with Julie Bosman, March 10
- Minnesota National Public Radio with Kerri Miller, March 17
- San Bernardino Sun with Michel Nolan, March 18
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation with Sarah L’Estrange, March 22

- National Public Radio with Lynn Neary, March 28
- The New York Times with Julie Bosman, April 20
- Florida Sun Sentinel with Scott Travis, May 2

Future Trends:

- Chicago Tribune's Triblocal with Sheryl DeVore, February 9 (computers in libraries)
- San Francisco Chronicle with Jessica Kwong, February 21 (future trends in library construction)
- Tampa Tribune with Michelle Sager, March 11 (future trends in library construction)
- Kaleva newspaper in Oulu, Finland, with Lauri Hirvonen, June 9

Return to New Orleans for the 2011 Annual Conference:

- The Times-Picayune with Jaquetta White, June 20

Travel and Speaking Opportunities

Since the last presidential report to Council, I presented at the:

- James Madison Award at the 13th Annual National Freedom of Information Day Conference at the Newseum, March 16
- Tennessee Library Association Conference in Murphreesboro, March 24 and 25
- Elluminate session with San Jose State University's School of Library and Information Science and ALA Student Chapter, April 5
- Texas Library Association Conference in Austin, April 15
- School of Library and Information Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo, April 18
- Alberta Library Association Conference in Jasper, April 29
- Florida Library Association Conference in Orlando, May 5
- Commencement of the Department of Information and Library Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, May 6
- Association of Slovakian Librarians in Stara Lesna on May 9, Kosiče on May 13, and Bratislava on May 16 (co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy)
- Association of Hungarian Librarians in Budapest, May 16
- School of Information Management at Wuhan University, China, May 24
- The Library Society of China's Early Careers in Libraries Conference in Suzhou, May 26
- Virtual Town Hall Meeting, June 1 (Our first-ever!)
- Finnish Library Association Conference in Oulu, June 8
- Helsinki University (co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy), June 13

And

- Welcomed Susan Hildreth at the ALA/AAM reception held on January 25 at the ALA Washington Office
- Participated in the ACRL Conference in Philadelphia, March 30-April
- Met with librarians from the National Library and the Parliament Library of Austria in Vienna, May 18
- Met with Dr. Li Chen, the deputy director of the National Library of China, in Beijing, May 23

- Met with Dr. Xiangdong Yan, Secretary General of the Library Society of China, May 23

Other Activities

The March-April President's column in *American Libraries* focused on "Transforming Libraries: Meeting the Needs of Members and Their Institutions."

The May-June President's column in *American Libraries*, "Wrapping Up a Busy Year."

I prepared the foreword for the upcoming ALA publication *Pre- and Post-Retirement Tips for Librarians*; a joint response with Keith Fiels to the February 15 *Library Journal* editorial, "Eroding ALA Democracy;" a response to the February 17 *New York Times* article, "Digital Age Is Slow to Arrive in Rural America;" a joint editorial with Nancy Everhart, AASL president, for the Early Education supplement in *USA Today's* March 18 edition; a response to Mike Shatzkin's April 7 article, "Libraries Make No Sense in the Future," in the Montreal edition of *Globe and Mail*; and the May 18 "Open Letter to the Los Angeles Unified School District on the Defunding of School Librarians."

With Gratitude...

...To ALA's staff and members. I can never thank you enough for all of your contributions to my presidential initiatives, the progress on task forces and committees, and the many other ways that we worked together to ensure libraries are responding to the informational needs of the 21st century.

Special thanks to my assistant, Shannon McMahon, for her patience, persistence, and calm demeanor as we tackled a challenging travel schedule and the thousands of messages I received as president.