

**2012-2013 ALA CD#30
2013 ALA Midwinter Meeting**

**REPORT OF THE DIGITAL CONTENT & LIBRARIES WORKING GROUP
SUBMISSION TO THE ALA COUNCIL**

**2013 ALA Midwinter Meeting
January 27, 2013**

The Digital Content & Libraries Working Group (DCWG) appreciates this opportunity to update the ALA Council on its activities, both through this written report and the upcoming oral presentation by Co-chairs Sari Feldman and Robert Wolven at the Council I meeting at the 2013 Midwinter Meeting.

The [charge](#) for the Working Group is broad, as implied by its title “digital content and libraries.” Through internal deliberations and consideration of extensive communications from ALA member groups and individual members, the Working Group decided to focus its work thus far on the ebook and “Big 6” trade publisher issue. Though digital content encompasses numerous important issues for the library community, it became clear to us that this ebook issue merited urgent attention and focus. The DCWG has worked in close collaboration with the overall leadership of ALA including our President, President-elect, and Executive Director.

As you know, President Maureen Sullivan distributed an [update](#) on the DCWG’s work on January 15, 2013, in text and video formats. Her update (included in the Appendix) already provides an excellent summary of our work in 2012, and so there is no need to develop another one. Thus, in this report to the Council, we emphasize some of the highlights since our last report to you.

The DCWG has been very busy since the 2012 Annual Conference, working closely with ALA leadership and many divisions, offices, and other ALA units. The DCWG activities from the past months may be divided into three categories: Analysis & Reports; Outreach Beyond the Library Community; and Communication Within the Library Community.

Analysis & Reports

- *Ebook Business Models for Public Libraries* was released in August 2012. This [report](#) describes and analyzes characteristics, constraints, and restrictions of business models (licensing agreements).
- The complementary report *Ebook Business Models: A Scorecard for Public Libraries* was released in January 2013. This [report](#) provides a framework for evaluating and comparing different business models and for understanding characteristics holistically, instead as isolated attributes (e.g., price). At its business meeting at Midwinter, the DCWG discussed distribution of a survey via the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), asking librarians what relative weight they would assign to the individual characteristics covered by the *Scorecard*.

Outreach Beyond the Library Community

- In the fall, the DCWG and ALA leadership took a more assertive (aggressive) position – first seen in Maureen Sullivan’s public statement protesting [Hachette’s price increase](#) and closely followed in the [open letter](#) to publishers that decried the inability of libraries to purchase some ebooks.
- Maureen Sullivan led delegations to New York in [September](#) and [December](#) to meet with publishers, the Association of American Publishers, and the Association of Authors’ Representatives. The purposes of these meetings included educating and advocating for library interests and laying the groundwork for future cooperation.

Communication Within the Library Community

- In late November, the DCWG released an *Ebook Media and Communications Toolkit* to support librarians’ efforts in advocacy and communications within their communities. The toolkit includes op-ed and press release templates for library supporters interested in informing the public of the role that libraries play in building literate and knowledgeable communities. Additionally, the toolkit provides guidance on ways to use the media templates, as well as ALA talking points, e-book data, and public service announcement scripts.
- In the fall, ALA launched the Ebooks & Digital Content [section](#) of the ALA Transforming Libraries website, which serves as a portal for users and a repository for our materials about this topic.
- ALA representatives continue to serve in leadership positions on related initiatives and projects such as the OCLC/Big Shift Initiative, the ReadersFirst Initiative, and the Pew Internet Project studies.

In 2012, ALA focused on the largest publishers. In 2013, we will continue these efforts, but also plan increased attention on other issues, such as the self-publishing phenomenon, publishers other than the Big Six, the author-library relationship, school libraries, accessibility, privacy, and other areas. The DCWG is meeting in Seattle to develop specific priorities for 2013.

During the course of our work, we have heard from many ALA members and really appreciate the feedback and support. The substantive input has been helpful to incorporate into DCWG work. The moral support is helpful to encourage our work. Direct efforts by ALA members to advocate are great – and we hope to see more of it, such as use of the media and communications toolkit in ALA members’ communities. We are thankful for the interest and support for our work by ALA leadership and members alike.

Submitted by

Robert Wollen and Sari Feldman, Co-chairs

ALA Digital Content & Libraries Working Group

APPENDIX

[A Message to All ALA Members from ALA President Maureen Sullivan](#)

January 15, 2013

As we mark the halfway point of the 2011–2015 ALA Strategic Plan, the American Library Association (ALA) has made significant strides towards its goal to provide leadership in the transformation of libraries and library services in an increasingly digital information environment. I am proud to be part of this important work with ALA Immediate Past-President Molly Raphael and President-elect Barbara Stripling. At the highest levels and across the organization, ALA has mobilized around ebooks and larger digital content issues affecting libraries of all types. A great deal of work was accomplished earlier this year under Molly's leadership and with the very good work accomplished by the Digital Content & Libraries Working Group (DCWG) that she appointed. This continues to be a priority for the Association.

As ALA President, I am encouraged by where ALA has positioned itself. Though there has not been enough progress with publishers and distributors, ALA has made many contributions to library advocacy. I know through my professional work in organizational consulting that revolutionary change is difficult and takes time to work through, and that paths forward are not clear cut. I'm pleased that ALA is making a good effort to navigate this revolution with, and on behalf of, our members. For their contributions to ALA and the library community, I particularly thank the co-chairs of the DCWG, Robert Wolven and Sari Feldman; the members of the DCWG; and the ALA staff who support the DCWG.

As we head into the 2013 ALA Midwinter Meeting, I thought it would be useful to "round up" and share highlights from the past year, say something about some next steps, and invite you to join our efforts. A strong foundation has been laid, and there is much more work ahead in this dynamic sphere. In order to create real change, we will need to deepen and go beyond historical relationships, rethink how we leverage technology to best serve readers, and even shift paradigms—for instance, from repository to creator. There is no doubt that "transformation" is the right frame of reference for the work before us.

Relationship-building and communication with publishers

The first major milestone for DCWG and for me, personally, was a set of meetings in New York with several "Big Six" publishers in January 2012. ALA needed to make our case directly at the highest levels in order to establish direct channels of communication and develop a better understanding of publisher concerns and misconceptions.

One issue that became clear from those meetings is the influential role of intermediaries—aggregators and/or retailers—in library ebook lending. Examination of the issue of library ebook lending involves a much broader look at the entire ecosystem, including not only publishers and libraries but also intermediaries, authors, and even literary agents. These first meetings also introduced us to a central point of negotiation: how much "friction" is acceptable in order for libraries and publishers to do business together? While our patrons love 24/7 access to our digital content, publishers are concerned

this easy availability might hurt sales. Of course, we librarians know that our waiting lists already constitute quite a bit of “friction.”

As a result of these meetings, we widened our net to include more players. We participated in new research and had deeper internal conversations about what “friction” means for libraries and our patrons and how this might translate into different business models. More information about these meetings—and those from subsequent visits to New York by the ALA delegation in May, September and December, and meetings during the PLA National Conference in March—can be found on the American Libraries E-Content blog:

- [Ebook Talks: The Details](#)
- [Ebook Talks Continued: ALA Meets with Distributors](#)
- [Ebooks: Promising New Conversations](#)
- [Focus on the Future](#)
- [On the Road for Ebooks: How ALA Advocated This Fall](#)

Increased media outreach

In any negotiation, leverage matters. From the first news story about HarperCollins changing its library ebook licensing terms, outreach to media has been part of our strategy to raise public awareness of the issues and to increase accountability. Over time, ALA communications have become more immediate and more proactive. As we found some publishers taking steps backward (with increased prices or eliminated access), we responded more quickly and aggressively. We reached out to editorial pages and news reporters to make our case directly to the public, as well as to publishers. Not long after I began my presidential term, we published an open letter calling for more immediate action on the pressing issues facing libraries and our patrons.

In November 2012 with your help, we brought all of this experience together to launch the ebook media and communications toolkit to share what we have learned and extend our reach further. Among the tools are templates and guidelines for using them with editorial and news media contacts, news hooks you can use locally, tips for building relationships with media contacts, and links to examples of ebook-related editorials and news stories.

More information on this work can be found here:

- [Press clips](#) (pdf)
- [Pew Internet Project research on libraries](#)
- [Ebook media and communications toolkit](#)

Information resources and tools for libraries and library advocates

The principal leverage point, of course, is you. The influence derived from our 58,000 members and the entire library community is powerful. ALA has stepped up its efforts to inform our members and to work collaboratively with our library partners. ALA’s elected leaders, DCWG members, and ALA staff have given presentations and updates at forums ranging from the Public Library Association and the Association of American Publishers to chapter conferences in Colorado, Indiana, and New Hampshire, and even to international conferences in Italy, China, and Russia.

We have published and shared more information and updates online. American Libraries kick-started the E-Content blog in fall 2011 and published two digital supplements in 2012 featuring contributions from many DCWG leaders and collaborators. For their part, DCWG subgroups have: outlined business models; initiated a series of tip sheets to provide librarians with clear definitions; developed examples of how digital content and digital formats impact library services; and identified resources for further information on the numerous and often complicated issues in providing digital resources to their patrons and students.

ALA is working collaboratively with other organizations on a range of efforts. One major initiative is a series of studies on e-reading trends and libraries being conducted by the Pew Internet Project with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. ALA is a partner in the Big Shift, an IMLS-funded research project through OCLC. ALA also participates in the ReadersFirst coalition initiated by New York Public Library, the Digital Public Library of America initiative, as well as in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' ebook workgroup.

More information on these tools and initiatives can be found here:

- [Business models](#)
- [Tip sheets](#)
- [E-Content blog](#)
- [Transforming Libraries website](#)

Next steps

As we start this new year, publisher merger talks are in the news and the landscape continues to shift. We must keep the pressure on large publishers, while also deepening existing relationships and building new ones across the ecosystem. For example, we will be connecting more with smaller and independent publishers, as well as with authors and literary agents. As we do so, we will keep you informed and create new tools for engagement along the way. We also will look more closely at increasing the possibilities for libraries to market, provide access to, and facilitate production of books. Self-publishing is an exploding area of growth. How might libraries play a role in this trend in furtherance of our goal to connect authors and readers?

DCWG members already are developing new resources related to ensuring ebook access for people with disabilities, as well as examining ebook business models for school libraries. Additional topics and goals are under consideration as we outline the work of the DCWG in 2013.

I have heard from many of our members across the nation on the critical importance of these issues, and I truly appreciate your interest and support. We have worked hard and well together over the past year, and there is certainly more to do in the year ahead. Please be assured that I am looking forward to this work ahead with all of you and our hard-working DCWG members and ALA staff to further advance our cause as we all work through the digital revolution.

Maureen Sullivan
ALA President