In attendance: Susan DiMattia, 2017-2018 Chair, Committee on Library Advocacy and Advocacy Coordinating Group; Amanda Barnhart, YALSA; Faye Chadwell, ACRL; Cindy Czesak, Chapter Relations; Dorcas Hand, AASL (COLA member) Majed Khader, Marshall University Libraries (COLA member); AASL; Joe Thompson, RUSA; Paul Moeller, ACRL; Ma’Lis Wendt, RMRT (COLA member)

Staff Liaisons: Marci Merola, Director, ALA Office for Library Advocacy; Jan Carmichael; Public Awareness Office; Megan Cusick, Office for Library Advocacy; Joaquin Falcon, Office for Library Advocacy

Introductions and Current Advocacy Projects

Susan began by reporting that the Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) had a productive meeting that morning, and said that this is a time of what she hopes will be positive change for the ALA. She also said a COLA member said that there is “too much information” coming at librarians out on the front lines and reminded the group that we should strive to keep our messaging simple if possible and reiterated the need for a united voice in advocacy.

Susan referenced ALA Council Document #35 on Organizational Effectiveness and stated that this is a good indicator as to where the ALA may be going, rethinking what we do, and how we do it. The group behind this document is looking for feedback and encouraged ACG members to send any comments they had their way. (http://connect.ala.org/files/ALA%20-%20Organizational%20Effectiveness%20Discussion%20-%20MW18%20final_0.pdf) She said that the newest Presidential budget proposal was about to be released, and it again eliminates IMLS funding. Last year the same issue was in play, but because of strong advocacy work, the IMLS budget was reinstated with a slight increase by Congress.

ALA has started a new initiative called Policy Corps and appointed 10 members to serve a 5-year term each, one of which is Hallie Rich, a COLA member. The ALA Washington Office has also issued their three-year strategic plan, and ACG members were asked to review it as it may expand or change COLA and ACG activities due to its priorities. ALA President-Elect and Executive Board Liaison Loida Garcia-Febo also visited the COLA meeting for a brief update and offered to take any questions the group had back to the Executive Board.
The Office for Library advocacy celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2018, and the charge to COLA and ACG are also 10 years old, and in need of an update to ensure that it captures the scope of work that the committee and subcommittee does. Susan urged the group to submit their suggestions and said she’d like this to be an exercise in “this is what we would like this group to be, and to work towards.” The group provided the following feedback:

- The current charge doesn’t contain a “task,” and it was suggested that the group start off with something small, and that could have a measurable achievement. Memorizing the four key messages of the Libraries Transform campaign was proposed as the first task that the group could undertake.

- Expect some accountability from members as they report back to their parent organizations and get a work plan in place.

- Have a system in place so that members can offer their suggestions virtually if they can’t make physical meetings.

- Is there a question that we can craft and associate with the four key messages that can be sent to ALA leadership? The answer could be transmitted via the ACG listserv for reporting at annual. Another member said they thought bringing the four key statements to parent organizations was a clever idea. It was also suggested that these messages could be taken back to library leadership across the country and ask them how they think the messages could be adopted.

- The ACG charge sounds like the basis for a discussion group, and there could be a topic presented where potential advocates could be engaged, possibly in a one-hour legislative day component. There could be other ways for ACG to educate and deliver content as well, perhaps in discussion forums, with breakout sessions that follow.

Report on Advocacy Bootcamp

Marci provided the group with a summary of the Bootcamp program, and reported that the first “Train the Trainer” session was presented the day before and had 17 attendees. The idea is to rethink the advocacy process with a long-term, sustained approach to things, with a special eye towards leadership, as many leaders are retiring, and a new generation of advocates is needed. It was suggested that one focus for ACG could be taking the Bootcamp structure to all its respective divisions and committees, and work with OLA to mesh and coordinate efforts, and this could also help capture the audience not already participating with their state associations.
Additional Ideas

It was recommended that the group read the ALA’s “Take a stand for libraries” document, especially the component on protecting the right to research, or “FASTR” legislation. Many universities are translating research results for public consumption, and Bootcamp can be a great bridge to bringing academic librarians into the advocacy process. More comments were added by the group:

- Diverse types of libraries advocate for different things, but all communities need to be healthy, and people understand what is important to the library community.

- We need Bootcamp-style storytelling, from an academic library setting to help round out our collection and expand our vocabulary in the process.

- We should make sure to include special libraries in our outreach. Special Library Association (SLA) librarians can be a “different breed,” and initially, they had a bit of a push back to the ALA, but the organization has since changed, and the ALA has an opportunity to engage them in dialogue and make some inroads.

- Another potential audience are rural libraries staffed with non-MLIS certified staff. A new project is underway in New York State to address this audience, and they hope to incorporate Bootcamp resources in their outreach.

- Academic libraries and libraries can sometimes think that advocacy is only a public library issue, but academic libraries have issues that they need to advocate for as well, and Bootcamp can be a useful tool for this effort.

- It was also reported that privatization efforts have been increasing in the past year, and the methods of engagement have been less than transparent. Representatives from a privatization firm have been approaching town finance people and pitching them directly, rather than the library director or trustees themselves. Tracking these cases is one of OLA’s focuses, following a specific protocol, and not naming any specific company or firm.

ALA Updates

Mary Ghikas will be the new Executive Director for the ALA through 2019, a promotion from her position as Acting Executive Director that she has held since July of 2017, after the retirement of Keith Michael Fiels. She will be leading the Association through the next round of the search for the new Executive Director.
Cathleen Bourdon will be retiring in July of 2018, and OLA is expected to be reporting to the ALA Washington Office after that. There is opportunity for networking and new opportunities, and OLA hopes to continue with its focus on state and local issues in this new relationship.

From Awareness to Funding 2018: In 2008 OCLC and PLA issued its report “From Awareness to Funding,” an overview as to how library service is viewed across the United States. OLA, with PLA and OCLC have been working on a follow-up report to be launched at the PLA Conference in Philadelphia.

Next Steps

Susan encouraged everyone to adopt the Libraries Transform campaign, as well as its four key messages. She also suggested members review the IMLS strategic plan that was recently issued. She also asked the group to continue to communicate with us, and said we are positioned to be more effective in the future.

A plan to circulate the current ACG charge for review to all members is in place for when we are a little further along in the drafting process. A survey will be compiled and distributed to all ALA divisions and round tables to see what the “hot button” issue is for each group, as well as what is what is trending, and what their needs may be. More details will follow.

Meeting adjourned.