

ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCE REMODEL: FAQ (14 January 2017) (updated 22 January 2017) (updated 13 March 2017)

On December 14, 2016, following preparation and discussion by the ALA Conference Committee, a ALA Conference Remodel Proposal was posted to ALA Connect (ALA Conference Committee) for member comment. Many comments and questions have been received. The summary and FAQ following are based both on the original proposal and on the subsequent questions and comments from members.

During and immediately after the 2017 Midwinter Meeting, the Conference Committee received additional feedback and was able to meet with a number of individual members and groups, including the ALA Executive Board and ALA Council. Some modifications were made to the “remodel” plan.

ALA CONFERENCE COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

- A more manageable & easily navigable Annual Conference.
- Reduced campus size in response to extensive member feedback.
- Clearly articulated content streams, bringing together both programs and peer-to-peer learning (e.g., discussion/interest groups) to provide the best-possible conference for attendees.
- Reduced schedule conflict between sessions on the same topic.
- Increased sustainability, both financial and environmental.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE REMODEL PROPOSAL

- An approximately 45% decrease in the number of assignable rooms for programs, discussion groups, meetings and all other conference activities. For all groups and all kinds of events, this means that communication and flexibility will be required.
- One-hour program sessions: 9-10, 10:30-11:30, 1-2, 2:30-3:30, 4-5, with the option to start at 8:30 rather than 9 (resulting in an 8:30-10.00 session) or to extend to 5:30 (resulting in a 4-5:30 session).
- Centrally-controlled, flat space utilization. Additional rooms will not be available for historical “peak” periods. The room inventory will be consistent from Friday through Tuesday.
- Convention Center space priority for programs, then discussion groups.
- Standard room sets. Rooms will be set at the beginning of conference and will not be changed during the conference. Three standards room sets – based primarily on size and necessary capacity – will be utilized:
 - Rounds (round banquet tables) This is flexible room set that accommodates both discussion groups and business meetings, as well as programs, and encourages interaction.
 - Combo – Rounds plus theatre rows in the back
 - Theatre (rows of seating) Theatre sets will be used for high attendance programs.

- A central, open submission site for all Annual Conference Contributed Program submissions.
- Contributed programs – either from groups or individuals – will be juried.
- Juries will have a common rubric (which is not subject specific), a common timetable and a common assessment framework.
- There will also be curated series, with specific requirements.
- All program submissions and all discussion/interest groups submissions will be tagged for general subject area, to enable attendees to find both programs and peer-to-peer learning on a topic.
- In general, business meetings (e.g., committee meetings) will be scheduled in hotel meeting space, or in convention center meeting space on Friday, in late afternoon time periods Saturday-Sunday, on Monday afternoon or Tuesday. *Conference Services is looking at the potential costs & trade-offs needed to expand wifi access in hotel meeting rooms.*
- To the extent possible, discussion groups will be placed in convention center space, with additional space available in hotels.
- *The Conference Committee is committed to conference-wide, program-level evaluation. Evaluation will be on the Committee's 2017 Annual Conference agenda.*
- *The Committee was also able to more fully develop the concept of an enhanced series of Presidents'/Chairs' programs – including ALA, its Divisions and Round Tables, as well as, based on their interest, ethnic affiliates. The Presidents'/Chairs' programs will not be juried; there will be a submission deadline (tbd).*
- *There will be opportunity once a program is selected to indicate any required speaker accommodations.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED

- **How many juries are proposed and how are they constituted:**
 - 15 Juries are proposed: 1 for each Division, an ALA jury (Round Tables, ALA Committees/Offices, Chapters, Affiliates), an Exhibitor jury (exhibitor-related programs), a Poster Sessions jury, and an IGNITE (short format) session jury. Fourteen of the 15 proposed juries exist currently.
 - The following 15-person composition is proposed for the ALA jury:
 - 9 RT representatives, rotating one-year terms among the following (proposed) groups:
 - SRRT/SUSTAIN
 - EMIERT/GLBTRT
 - GAMERT/MAGIRT
 - GODORT/VRT
 - LHRT/IRRT
 - IFRT/IRRT
 - LEARNRT/LIRT
 - NMRT/RMRT

- FAFLRT/LSSIRT/SORT
Note: ERT was not included. The librarian members of ERT jury sessions proposed by exhibitors; this is an existing process. The program room is charged back.
- 4 ALA Committee/Office representatives, selected within defined clusters, for a one-year term, with year-to-year rotation within the cluster.
 - Advocacy Cluster: Committee on Library Advocacy (Office for Library Advocacy); Public Awareness Committee (Public Awareness Office); Chapter Relations Committee (Chapter Relations Office); Public/Cultural Programming Advisory Committee (ALA Public Programs Office); Research & Statistics Committee (Office for Research & Statistics).
 - Information Policy Cluster: Legislation Committee (Washington Office); OITP Advisory Committee (Washington – Office for Information Technology Policy); Intellectual Freedom Committee (Office for Intellectual Freedom); International Relations Committee (International Relations Office); Literacy Committee (Office for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion).
 - Professional & Leadership Development Cluster: Committee on Professional Ethics (Office for Intellectual Freedom); Education Committee (Office for Human Resource Development & Recruitment); HRDR Advisory Committee (Office for Human Resource Development & Recruitment); Committee on Archives, Libraries and Museums (ALA Library); Committee on Accreditation (Office for Accreditation).
 - Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Cluster: Committee on Diversity (Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services); Rural, Native & Tribal Libraries of All Kinds (ODLOS); ODLOS Advisory Committee (ODLOS); Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (Office for Human Resource Development & Recruitment) ; ALA-CBC Joint Committee (Executive Office).
- 1 Ethnic Affiliate representative selected through the ODLOS Advisory Committee from among the following: AILA, APALA, BCALA, CALA, REFORMA.
- 1 person from the membership of the ALA Conference Committee, who will chair the jury.
- A group may opt out of participation, in which case the opportunity moves to the next group in the cluster.
- To increase system efficiency a standard maximum size (10) for a jury was initially recommended. There is no system limitation, however, and existing (Division) juries vary in size and composition. A reasonable balance of participation and efficiency is recommended.
- NOTE: The chair of each jury will be the contact person for ALA Conference Services and the ALA Conference Committee, should questions arise or clarifications be needed.

- **On what basis will juries assess proposals?**

- The ALA Conference Committee has been reviewing a draft set of review guidelines and will approve a final recommendation at the 2017 Midwinter Meeting. Review guidelines will be assessed after each conference cycle, to support continuous improvement.
- The proposed criteria are based on criteria currently used by one or more ALA Divisions for division national conferences or ALA conference programs.
- The current proposal recommends 10 criteria for assessing program proposals:
 - Proposal Description: Does the program description clearly, with sufficient detail, outline the proposed presentation?
 - Target Audience/Relevance: Who is the target audience and why would this session be relevant to them?
 - Timeliness/Demand: Is the topic timely, new and/or in demand?
 - Innovation: Does the content offer fresh, memorable ideas, methods or resources?
 - Learning Outcomes/Takeaways: Are learning outcomes (takeaways) clear, specific and actionable?
 - Presentation/Engagement Style: Is the proposed presentation likely to engage participants actively in discussion, thought or active learning?
 - Collaboration: *Is collaboration, either internal or external to ALA, involved in the proposed program?*
 - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: *Does the proposal include learning outcomes which explicitly support Equity, Diversity and Inclusion?*
 - Advocacy, Information Policy, Professional & Leadership Development: Does the proposal include learning outcomes which explicitly support Advocacy, Information Policy or Professional & Leadership Development?
 - [Speaker: Have you seen this presented present a program? If so, please rate.] *This has been deleted, based on Committee discussion.*
 - Panel: Does the proposal demonstrate how the perspectives of 2-4 presenters will be brought into a cohesive conversation/dialogue – rather than multiple, unrelated presentations? [If a panel program is proposed.]
- The review criteria will be adapted for juries that are specialized by format (e.g., poster sessions, IGNITE! sessions). The IGNITE! jury process includes a public voting process.

- **How many programs will each group select?**

- Each jury will select up to a defined number of programs. That number will be based on historical information about the number of programs from that group; the number will be less than the historical average, but will be exclusive of programs in “curated” streams (e.g., News You Can Use), “Orientation” sessions, or Presidents’/Chairs’ Programs.

- The number of programs juried by the ALA jury will be based on the combined number of programs historically offered by Round Tables, ALA Committee/Offices and Affiliates.
- Juries will have significant latitude.
 - A jury may “hold back” 1 or more program slot, to allow for late opportunities or emerging issues. There will be a final submission deadline, tbd.
 - A jury should select 1 or more “alternate” program, in case a selected program must be cancelled.
 - A jury may choose – based on topic, format or other criteria – to allow two program slots for a single program. That program then counts for two programs out of the total allowable.
 - A jury may set aside one or more program slot(s) for a “solicited” program when it feels a critical content area has not been addressed by submissions.
- All contributed programs will be scheduled in the convention center and all will be digitally captured, subject to a rights agreement with the presenter(s).

- **Who can submit a program proposal?**

- Anyone. A group or an individual. If the proposal is submitted by a group, a contact person must be provided.
- Collaboration is encouraged, particularly collaborations that may bring diversity of perspective to an issue or topic. *Internal or External collaboration will provide “extra points” in jury consideration and is included in the rubric (above).*
- A group or individual submitting a proposal will specify the jury for which the proposal is intended. Only one jury may be specified.
- Each proposal must be tagged to at least one content area.
- Each proposal may be tagged with an many subject descriptors as apply.
- A proposal will not include a specific day/time requirement; it may include a “do not conflict with _____” note.

- **What is the proposed timetable?**

- The initial “remodel” is proposed for the 2018 ALA Annual Conference (New Orleans).
- The Submission Site will open in late April 2017 and close in mid-August.
- Juries will complete their work by late September.
- The ALA Conference Committee will work with ALA Conference Services in October-November to (a) review scheduling for undesirable conflicts, (b) review curated content streams and (c) determine if there are major gaps (i.e., a critical current issue not address by the program) that should be addressed.
- Preliminary program information will be available when Annual Conference registration opens.

- **How will content “buckets” or streams be identified.**

- The ALA Conference Committee, which is representative in its structure, will develop content streams in consultation with groups across the Association.
- The unique “affordance” of the ALA Annual Conference is that it brings together content from a complex and diverse field, across all types of libraries, to people in many different career stages. This has significant value and must be maintained.

NOTE: Based on extended discussion at the Conference Committee meeting, individuals and groups will be asked to “tag” proposals, to a single broad content area, based on the existing list, with the option to enter a new area under “other”; they will also be asked to select all terms that apply from a list of subject terms. The objective is to make it possible for attendees to identify those programs that meet their individual needs. The Conference Committee, in the process of structuring the final program (sequence) to provide maximum clarity and coherence for attendees as well as minimal conflict between programs on the same topic, will create content “streams” based on the programs and discussion/interest groups actually being offered. Programs will also be searchable by subject tags in the Scheduler.

- **What are “curated” series?**

- “Curated” series are un-juried but must meet specific organizational criteria. Each operates within defined limits (number of programs, size of programs, etc.)
- All curated program series will be in the convention center and all will be digitally captured, subject to rights agreements with the presenter(s). [Auditorium Series programs are frequently not recorded.]
- The current “curated” series are:
 - The **Auditorium Series** programs are selected from among major authors proposed by their publishers. ALA Conference Services works with the ALA Conference Committee on this series. Programs are expected to fill a 1,000+ seat auditorium.
 - **The News You Can Use** series includes updates/briefings on new research, legislation or regulation. By their nature, they tend to be late. A limited amount of space is set aside for these sessions. They are expected to fill a 200+ seat room.
 - The **President’s/Chair’s Programs** are developed by individual Divisions, Round Tables, Affiliates – up to one/unit or group. [Programs are expected to fill a 300-500 capacity room, with some exceeding 500.] *This requirement was deleted, based on discussion with Round Table representatives. Presidents’/Chairs’ programs may fit a variety of room sizes, based on the audience anticipated by the sponsoring group.*

- **Are there other unjuried programs?**

- Most Divisions and some Round Tables and ALA Committees/Offices offer “101” or orientation programs. These may be scheduled outside of the convention center and are not recorded.
- The ALA/JobLIST Placement Center offers career development sessions. These are offered in the Placement Center. By policy, individuals are not required to register to use Placement Center resources. These sessions are not recorded.
- Various ALA Exhibits Stages. The “Stages” offer authors and other presenters. The “Stages” are curated by ALA Conference Services. This content is offered in a less formal setting. “Stages” content is not recorded.

- **How will Discussion Groups fit into the new structure?**

- Discussion Groups (also including **Interest Groups, Member Initiative Groups**, etc.) represent valuable opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning. They have central position, along with programs, in the conference remodel.
- Discussion Groups will not be “juried.”
- Discussion Groups will be subject to the normal limitations of available space/time. A 2nd Discussion Group space request from the same group – before all requesting groups have been scheduled – may be frowned upon.
- Groups/individuals entering a Discussion Group must tag the session with one or more subject term and to a broad content area. Note that the subject tag(s)/content area for a Discussion Group may vary from conference to conference, depending on the anticipated focus of the group at that conference.
- Discussion Groups may offer entirely informal peer-to-peer learning (discussion); they may offer formal presentation. They may offer a blend of formal and informal learning.
- Discussion Groups will not be digitally captured.
- Discussion Groups will be scheduled in the convention center to the extent that space allows; they will be scheduled in hotel spaces as necessary.
- Discussion/Interest Group which are open peer-to-peer learning opportunities are distinguished from “Business Meetings” – meetings of committee, boards and other groups to which one must be appointed or elected.

- **How will Round Tables be represented in this remodeled structure?**

- While ALA Round Tables have not historically done a high volume of programming, they represent significant content areas and member concerns within the Association.
- A Round Table may choose to offer a President’s/Chair’s Program; a Round Table (or a member of a Round Table) may submit a proposal to the ALA or any other jury; some Round Tables regularly have “update” content (e.g., information on new legislation) that may fit into the curated News You Can Use series.
- Because of the nature of Round Tables – often issue-focused – it would be reasonable for a Round Table to submit a space request for a Discussion Group Session, e.g.,

Intellectual Freedom Round Table Discussion Group. One “discussion group” session for each of the 20 Round Tables has been tentatively assumed.

- How are the five associations of librarians of color (AILA, APALA, BCALA, CALA, REFORMA) included in this proposal?
 - In reviewing past conferences, it was clear that AILA, APALA, BCALA, CALA and REFORMA all held meetings at ALA Annual and frequently offered significant content, often including a President’s Program.
 - These sessions were typically offered in hotels, based on business arrangements between ALA and each individual affiliate. While there are trade-offs in both cost and control for both the affiliates and ALA, the ALA Conference Committee and ALA Conference Services believe there is an overriding value to be gained in fully incorporating this content into the Annual Conference.
 - In planning for the Presidents’/Chairs’ Program series, a program from each of these five affiliate associations has been incorporated.
 - Additionally, affiliate organizations may propose Contributed Programs through the submission and jury process.
 - The ALA Conference Committee and ALA Conference Services will work with them to schedule meetings and discussion groups, within the limits of available space.
 - The same rules will be applied as for ALA groups.
 - There will be no room charges for sessions included in the main ALA space and schedule.
- **What about program evaluation?**
 - The ALA Conference Committee is committed to implementing consistent evaluation on all programs across the Association.
 - Again, as it did in developing guidelines for jury consideration, the ALA Conference Committee will start with the evaluation forms/processes used by ALA Divisions and other groups within the Association.
 - Because of the volume of other agenda items at this Midwinter, a decision on evaluation form will be made at the 2016 ALA Annual Conference.
 - In addition to post-conference evaluation by attendees, it is also important to know who many people attended various sessions. Session sponsors will be asked to provide that information.
 - The ALA Conference Committee and ALA Conference Services are currently proposing use of the conference app for feedback.
- **What about Pre-Conferences and Pre-Conference Tours? What about ticketed events like banquets?**
 - Pre-Conferences and Pre-Conference Tours have not been discussed by the Committee as part of this remodel. They will continue as they have been.

- The same for ticketed events such as banquets.
- **How do Committees and other business meetings fit into this new structure?**
 - Well, in some respects, this is the trickiest issue to address.
 - Historically, the largest single block of activity (i.e., number of sessions in a category) are committee and other business meetings.
 - In addition to being a numerically large group, committee are also complex to deal with because (a) many take 2 (or more) program “slots,” (b) many have highly unusual room arrangements, and (c) committees may meet individually or in “all-committee” combined sessions.
 - Historically, ALA members have tended to belong to multiple committees/boards – creating personal arrays of meeting conflicts.]
 - Committee members often articulate a conflict between the need to meet with their committee(s) and a desire to attend relevant programs or discussion groups.
 - The ALA Conference Committee is looking at several approaches to scheduling committee meetings – and a decision is anticipated by late winter.
 - The most likely possibility is that a group (or cluster of groups) will be assigned a block of space, which may be scheduled as the group chooses, since many groups have very specific “sequencing” requirements.
 - The ALA Council remains scheduled as it currently is, both in terms of time and room arrangement, generally in the convention center.
 - A cluster of rooms (hotel space, in a Board set, has been tentatively set aside for Boards (ALA, Division, Round Table).
 - A small number of rooms will designated for ALA’s famous “hollow square + audience” set. Groups absolutely requiring that set will be asked to work together to allocate the space.
 - All other rooms will be set in rounds, so provide the greatest flexibility. (Rounds can be used for meetings, discussion groups or programs.)
 - And yes, ALA Conference Services is looking at the options (and cost impact) of providing increased access of wifi in hotel meeting rooms.
 - *A “flex-room” will be set aside – set with multiple round tables – for “pop-up” meetings, to promote flexibility and encourage interaction.*
- **Will the Conference Remodel have a (positive) impact on site selection options?**
 - Quite possibly. One of the factors that distinguishes ALA – not necessarily in a positive way – among association conferences is its current demand for 350+ meeting rooms concurrently. The remodel proposal reduces that to 200 rooms concurrently – somewhat better.
 - Note that a 200 room starting inventory results in a net of about 100 assignable rooms. There are many reasons for that, including the way hotels count/divide rooms (think of those rooms with airwalls) and the need to set aside spaces for things like AV storage.

- And, getting back to site selection, there are many other factors that impact site selection: hotel inventory, airline lift, state laws, local price structure, etc.
- **Were there other issues/questions raised in the feedback?**
 - Yes.
 - Here are the topics in the ALA Conference Committee's or ALA Conference Services "Parking Lot":
 - Mailing badges
 - Printed programs
 - A virtual conference
 - More virtual participation in the face-to-face conference
 - Midwinter
- **In case I want to participate, where/when does the ALA Conference Committee meet at the 2017 Annual Conference?**

The ALA Conference Committee and the 2017 Conference Program Coordinating Team meet on Saturday morning. The location will be posted when available.