

ALA Executive Board
Annual Conference 2001 – San Francisco

TOPIC: ALA President & Executive Director –
Roles & Responsibilities

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion and Consensus

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Key Roles and Responsibilities: ALA President-ALA Executive Director

I

Both the ALA President and the ALA Executive Director act within the context of Council and Executive Board roles and responsibilities, as defined in the *ALA Constitution and Bylaws* and in *ALA Policy Manual*. Italicized sections are quoted directly from the source document.

ALA Council

- ∅ *The Council of the American Library Association shall be the governing body of the Association.* [ALA Constitution, Article VI, Sec. 1 (a)]
- ∅ *The Council shall determine all policies of the Association, and its decisions shall be binding upon the Association, except as provided in Sec. 4c of this Article.* [ALA Constitution, Article VI, Sec. 1 (b)]
- ∅ *In order to carry out the business of the Association, Council, on the recommendation of the Committee on Organization, shall establish standing committees and special committees. Standing committees may be committees of the Association or committees of Council.* [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Sec. 1]
- ∅ *Appointments to the Committees of the Council will be made by the Council Committee on Committees.* [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Sec 2 (b)]
- ∅ *The annual estimates of income and budget objectives for each year are to be submitted to Council for approval.* [ALA Bylaws, Article IX, Sec. 1]
- ∅ *The American Library Association (ALA) is unique among American associations in the manner in which it is structured. It is one association, with indivisible assets and a single set of uniform administrative, financial, and personnel policies and procedures. It is governed by one Council, from which its Executive Board is elected, and is managed by an Executive Director who serves at the pleasure of that Board. It is also the home for eleven Divisions, each of which has a statement of responsibility developed by its members and approved by ALA Council;...a separate Board of Directors, elected by its members, and responsible to ALA Council.* [ALA 6.4.1]
- ∅ *All ALA units are responsible to Council which determines policies. Council's actions, however, may be overset by the membership. Therefore, primarily and ultimately the responsibility for the use of the American Library Association name rests with the aggregate membership.* [ALA Policy 9.1]

ALA Executive Board

- ∅ *The Executive Board shall act for the Council in the administration of established policies and programs. The Executive Board shall be the body which manages within this context the affairs of the Association, but shall delegate management of the day-to-day operation to the Association's Executive Director. The Executive Board shall make recommendations to Council with respect to matters of policy. [ALA Constitution, Article VII, Sec. 3]*
- ∅ *The Executive Board shall appoint all other officers and all committees of the Association not otherwise provided for and shall fix the compensation of all paid officers and employees. Only personal members of the Association shall be appointed to committees except by authorization of the Executive Board. [ALA Constitution, Article VIII, Sec. 4]*
- ∅ *Not less than two weeks prior to the midwinter meeting, the president-elect shall report to the Executive Board for the Committee on Appointments. At a meeting prior to or during the midwinter meeting of the Council, the Executive Board shall consider the nominations and makes its decisions as to appointments. [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Sec 6]*
- ∅ *The Executive Board shall designate the chairperson of each committee annually except for the committees of council, which chairpersons are designated as set out in Article VIII, Sec 2 (d) of the Bylaws. [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Sec. 7 (a)]*
- ∅ *Any vacancy occurring on a committee, except for committees of Council, shall be filled by appointment by the Executive Board until the expiration of the conference year in which the vacancy occurs, at which time appointment to fill out the unexpired term shall be made. [ALA Bylaws, Article VIII, Sec. 7 (b)]*
- ∅ *A report shall be made annually to the membership, by a duly authorized member of the Executive Board, detailing receipts and expenditures, explaining the Association's fiscal status, and reporting on the audit. [ALA Bylaws, Article IX, Sec. 3]*
- ∅ *The Executive Board shall send to members of Council copies of the full minutes of all its meetings, together with any explanatory or other statements on matters coming before Council for action. Biennially, the Executive Board shall prepare and submit to Council a progress report on the health of the Association. This report shall bring together the data needed to assess the Association's progress in accomplishing its objectives. [ALA Policy, 5.1]*
- ∅ *In addition to its meetings at Annual Conference and Midwinter Meetings, the ALA Executive Board shall meet during the weeks beginning with the last Mondays in April and October, subject to availability of its members. Dates shall be selected and published well in advance. [ALA Policy 7.4.9]*
- ∅ *The American Library Association will pay expenses of members of the Executive Board to Midwinter Meetings, Annual Conferences, and interim meetings of the*

A good executive secretary [director] will stand aloof from the politics and rivalries of members, working for the overall good of the organization.”

“The executive secretary [director] directs the administration of the organization, employs staff members with the approval of the governing board, and performs other duties assigned by the voting body, the governing board, or the president.”

“A competent and loyal executive secretary [director] is a great asset to any organization, providing continuity within an association whose leaders are changing frequently and whose members are busy with their own occupations.” (Sturgis, 217)

III

Background

The 1993 *Structure and Governance Audit of ALA* provides additional framework and recommendations. This study, at the specific request of the ALA Council, was added to the charge of the Organizational Self-Study Committee, appointed by ALA President Marilyn Miller. The study was performed by Consensus Management Group. Some of the recommendations were subsequently incorporated in the recommendations of the OSSC. Some recommendations were ultimately approved, others not.

The *Structure and Governance Audit of ALA* addressed the roles of Council and the Executive Board, as well as the President and Executive Director. The roles and responsibilities of the President in an association

- 5) *Reviewing and approving the implementation plans presented by the Executive Director.*
- 6) *Monitoring accountability of the Executive Director to the Executive Committee [Executive Board] and the Council.*
- 7) *Assuring the accountability of the Executive Committee [Executive Board] and the Council to the membership.*

The report also defined key tasks and functions of the ALA President, acknowledging that only a few were mandated in ALA's Constitution, Bylaws and Policies, but noting that all were critical to organizational success:

- *As Chairperson of the Executive Committee [Executive Board] and Council, the President must facilitate their governance roles and responsibilities, while preserving the integrity of all Executive Committee [Executive Board] and Council processes.*
- *Achieving consensus on controversial issues after encouraging full debate and hearing a broad range of views. Once the Executive Committee [Board] and Council have come to consensus, the President must help the Executive Committee [Board] and Council speak with one voice. Gover*

than individual, objectives.” Presidential “imprint” is made through President’s

- *Becoming a recognized national presence in the library and information communities, with a firm knowledge of libraries and librarianship.*
- *Assuring accountability to leaders and members. Organizational performance and the Executive Director's performance should have identical criteria, i.e. pre-determined, clearly articulated desired outcomes.*
- *Continuing to sustain her/his own professional growth.*

Finally, this portion of the governance audit concludes as follows:

The Executive Committee [Board] and Council are responsible for the governance of ALA, but the Executive Director should be responsible for the administration of ALA. In other words, the governing bodies determine what ALA should be doing, but the Executive Director and staff should be given both authority and responsibility for deciding how it is to be done, subject to review by the Executive Committee [Board]. Staff should then be accountable for performance to the Executive Committee [Board], through the Executive Director.

The Executive Director is the only employee of the Executive Committee [Board]. All other staff members work for the Executive Director to accomplish the association's objectives. This position should also reinforce the continuity of the association, from each elected administration to the next.

IV

These roles and responsibilities and their governance context are reiterated within the literature of both association management and board leadership. Recently – and notably – Doug Eadie's *Extraordinary Board Leadership: The Seven Keys to High-Impact Governance*, makes several points relevant to the discussion of President-Executive Director roles, relationships and responsibilities.

- 1) Eadie focuses on the relationship between the CEO [Executive Director] and Executive Board – “who work together as a cohesive strategic leadership team...with reciprocal obligations and responsibilities.”
- 2) He notes the inherent challenges of the relationship, pointing out that both executive directors and executive board members and chairs tend to be “bright, high-achieving, strong-willed people with large egos,” that there is “inherent murkiness of the terrain at the board-CEO level,” with “lots of shared activity and little easy-to-understand, black-and-white division of labor.” Frustration and tension, he notes, “come with the territory.”
- 3) He places the President/Executive Director relationship in the context of the Executive Board/Executive Director relationship. The President is the “chief executive officer” of the Board itself – not the organization. The President (Chairman of the Board) is responsible for the effective functioning of the Board. The Executive Director (CEO) is responsible to the Board as a whole – not just the President.
- 4) He defines several keys to a sound Executive Board/Executive Director relationship.
 - A strategic leadership team philosophy and attitude.
 - Commitment to managing the Executive Board/Executive Director relationship as a “high priority leadership concern.”
 - Development by the Executive Director of leadership skills necessary to build and maintain the partnership.

- Creative and flexible definition of the Executive Board/Executive Director roles in “certain key organizational processes that call for active involvement on both their parts.”
 - Negotiation of detailed CEO performance targets by the Executive Board/Executive Director.
 - Provision of resources required by the CEO to achieve negotiated targets.
 - Executive Board/Executive Director “collaboration” in “rigorously appraising CEO performance.”
 - Personal commitment to professional growth by the Executive Director.
 - A close Board Chair [President] – Executive Director team.
 - Active involvement of the management team by the Executive Director in the work of supporting the Executive Board’s governing performance.
 - “Open, honest, frequent communication” between the Executive Board and Executive Director.
- 5) The Executive Board must “seriously intend to focus its collective time and attention on producing high-impact governance....”
- 6) The Executive Director must “play the leading role in building and managing the relationship...” and “be passionately committed to strong board leadership.” Eadie describes four critical capacities for long-term survival and growth, stating that each is dependent on “aggressive” Executive Director leadership.
- The capacity to govern through a “board that is creatively involved in making the most important decisions about your organization’s mission, its directions for the future, and its effectiveness in achieving planned targets.”
 - The capacity “to regularly and systematically generate and implement significant innovations...intended to capitalize on opportunities and to counter threats, above and beyond running the day-to-day operations.”
 - The capacity “to build and maintain a strong, positive public image and effective relationships with key external stakeholders....”

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