



**LIBRARIES  
TRANSFORM<sup>®</sup>**

**An Invitation to Apply for the Position of**

**Executive Director**

**American Library Association**

**Chicago, Illinois**

**Search Summary**

Libraries are an iconic feature of American civic life. For many, libraries have introduced them to the joy of learning and the magic of books; have offered a safe and productive haven for study, research and reflection; and have transformed user's lives through educational programs and community resources. Not only have America's libraries changed the lives of many of their users, they themselves have transformed as societal needs, technology, and other forces in the economy have dramatically reshaped the role and nature of libraries. Libraries have adapted to the digital age and are committed to meeting the evolving needs of their communities.

The current Executive Director, Keith Michael Fiels, has served the ALA for fifteen years. His tenure is marked by important developments in the field and the Association. Mr. Fiels is retiring on July 31, 2017. Mary Ghikas, Senior Associate Executive Director, will serve as Interim Executive Director until the search concludes.

The American Library Association (ALA) seeks a dynamic, innovative, entrepreneurial, and experienced leader in the library and information resources field to serve as its next Executive Director. Founded in 1876, the ALA is the world's oldest and largest library association and promotes the work of libraries and the value of professional library and information science education. It advocates for issues and values that are important to the field and to a free and open information society. The ALA achieves these goals through its programs, publications, conferences, professional development and outreach work. The Association, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, represents over 58,000 members, has a staff of 260, and has an annual budget of \$52 million. The ALA also has an office in Washington DC that represents libraries on Capitol Hill, and consists of the Office of Government Relations (OGR) and the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP).

ALA has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

- **History and Mission**

Founded on October 6, 1876, during the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the mission of the ALA is “to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.”

- **Core Values**

The Association is committed to:

- Extending and expanding library services in America and around the world
- All types of libraries – academic, public, school and special
- All librarians, library staff, trustees and other individuals and groups working to improve library services
- Member service
- An open, inclusive, and collaborative environment
- Ethics, professionalism and integrity
- Excellence and innovation
- Intellectual freedom
- Social responsibility and the public good

- **Strategic Priorities**

In June, 2015, the ALA Council, adopted a new Strategic Plan for the Association which outlined three strategic directions: *advocacy, information policy, and professional and leadership development*. In January of 2017 the Council adopted a fourth strategic direction: *equity, diversity and inclusion*. These strategic directions are identified as areas of intense focus for the next three to five years. For each strategic direction, there are goals which articulate outcomes to be achieved and answer the question, “What would success look like?” In addition, strategies have been identified for achieving each goal.

- **Governance Structure**

ALA is governed by an elected Council which is its policy-making body, and an Executive Board led by the ALA President, which acts for the Council in the administration of established policies and programs. In this context, the Executive Board is the body that manages the affairs of the Association, delegating management of the Association’s day-to-day operation to the Executive Director. ALA also has 37 standing committees and as necessary a limited number of task forces and working groups. The Association’s operations are directed by the Executive Director and implemented by staff through a structure of programmatic offices and support units.

ALA is home to eleven membership divisions each focused on a type of library or library function, and each having an executive director, board and staff to manage its membership and programs. In addition, there are twenty round tables each with its own board and limited staff support. The divisions and round tables have their own standing committees, subcommittees, task forces, and working groups. A network of affiliates, chapters, and other organizations enables the ALA to reach a broad and diverse audience.

- **Staff and Office Locations**

The Executive Director has nine direct reports: Senior Associate Executive Director; Associate Executive Director, Advocacy and Member Relations; Associate Executive Director, Publishing; Associate Executive Director, Washington DC Office; Chief Financial Officer; Associate Executive Director, Human Resources; Director, Governance; Director, Development and the Director, Center for the Future of Libraries. The majority of the 260-member staff is based in the Headquarters Office in Chicago, Illinois. Other staff locations include Washington DC, where the national advocacy office is located; Pennsylvania where the United for Libraries staff is based; and Connecticut where the ACRL Choice publishing arm is based.

- **Budget**

The current operating budget of ALA is \$52 million. Major revenue sources are membership dues, conference registration fees and publishing income. Major categories of expenses include, but are not limited to programming, staff salaries and benefits. The ALA endowment is currently valued at \$38.7 million.

For additional information about ALA, including its various programs and services, please visit the organization's website at [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

### **PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Executive Director is appointed by and reports to the ALA Executive Board. He/she is a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Executive Board and serves as secretary for both the Board and the ALA Council, the governing body of the Association. Principal responsibilities of the role are:

- **Leadership**

- Provide the vision and inspiration to carry out the mission of the ALA.
- Represent the interests of ALA and its membership by providing long-range planning, both strategic and operational; leading the strategic planning process; taking a proactive approach to determining the current and future needs of the Association. Interpret and administer ALA policies. Work effectively with the Executive Board and Council to develop, recommend and implement new or enhanced policies.

- Establish close working relationships with the ALA leadership to maintain effective lines of communication with all membership units, divisions, affiliates and committees of the Association.
- The Executive Director also serves as the Executive Director of ALA Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA). The ALA-APA is a nonprofit organization chartered in the State of Illinois for the purpose of promoting “the mutual professional interests of librarians and other library workers.”

- **Management**

- Maintain a sound operational structure for ALA. Provide for organizational effectiveness, management continuity, accountability, and diversity in hiring and placement. Sustain a proactive, results-oriented staff that demonstrates teamwork and mutual support and functions effectively across the units of the organization. The Executive Director will capitalize on the talent and interests of the ALA membership and staff.
- Expand the Association’s current equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and support affirmative action requirements by creating and managing a diverse headquarters workforce. Actively support ALA’s scholarship efforts to recruit people of color and other underrepresented groups to the profession.
- Provide the Board and membership with ongoing evaluation regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of Association activities, programs, and services. Plan, organize, and direct ongoing membership promotion and retention programs and membership activities. Support the Executive Board and enable it to work effectively.
- Support the work of the Council, the offices and boards of the ALA’s divisions and roundtables, committee chairs, sponsors, exhibitors, and program participants in the development of plans and programs for Association conferences and similar activities.
- Coordinate, guide, and integrate the activities of the ALA units, including divisions and roundtables, with the ALA mission, goals and priorities.

- **Financial Oversight**

- Oversee, manage, and expand the financial assets and affairs of the Association, which include a large operating budget from multiple sources, a growing endowment, and an ALA-owned building.
- Coordinate the preparation, approval, and presentation of financial plans, annual budgets, audits, etc. Ensure that appropriate accounting practices are followed and that all necessary financial and budgetary records are maintained within each ALA unit.

- Work with the Board, the Council, the ALA Endowment Trustees, the ALA Development Office and other individual units of the Association to develop additional sources of revenue for the Association. Direct the ALA Development Office's fundraising activities in support of the Association's mission and goals, and support the fundraising efforts of the ALA's constituent units. Advance the goals of the organization through well planned, diverse development activities.

- **Representing ALA**

- Promote the image and position of ALA by partnering with the ALA President and representing the Association. Establish and maintain effective relationships with other related or affiliated organizations in the library and information resources world.

### **MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE ALA AND THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The position of Executive Director of the American Library Association offers an extraordinary and exciting opportunity to champion, represent and support one of the most trusted and valuable institutions in American society. The next Executive Director will be able to leverage the organization's strong reputation and the passion and dedication of the Association's members, staff and elected leaders to build even stronger support for libraries, those who work in them, and the millions of citizens who benefit from them. To do this, the next Executive Director must tackle the following five crucial, and interrelated, challenges and opportunities:

- **Provide strategic leadership and vision to an organization with a strong brand, legacy and reputation which is also facing substantial uncertainties due to the changing political landscape, technological and demographic change, and economic constraints.**

By most objective measures, ALA is a powerful and successful organization. It is internationally renowned, has considerable intellectual and financial resources; it has a passionate staff, membership and elected leaders. It represents one of the most highly respected institutions in the Nation. However, the Association's size, history and traditional structure and culture are now limiting its ability to thrive and to reach higher levels of performance and impact. The Executive Director search affords the Association an opportunity to recruit new leadership, building on the past, and position the organization for the future. This will require vision, commitment to the mission, strong management skills, political diplomacy, and the capacity and courage to make hard decisions about priorities and resource allocation.

- **Take pro-active steps to ensure the ALA's long-term financial sustainability.**

ALA is in healthy financial shape, but, as the organization looks to the future, uncertainties and threats face each of its traditional major sources of revenue: *membership, conference registration fees and publications*. Other scholarly and professional organizations are facing similar uncertainties and threats. While the challenges seem clear, the solutions are not. The ALA needs to take proactive steps to both stabilize losses in traditional sources of revenue and to further diversify revenue streams. Such actions will require astute assessment of external trends and realistic and innovative ideas for action, including a more ambitious and better resourced fundraising and development program. In addition, the expense side cannot be ignored. Lower priority programs need to be identified and eliminated, including associated staffing and infrastructure. This will not be easy but will help to free up resources for priority initiatives and help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization.

- **Streamline and revitalize ALA's organizational and governance structures.**

There is widespread consensus that ALA's structure is unwieldy and limits the Association's agility, effectiveness and efficiency. This encompasses both the internal staff structure of offices and divisions, and the governing structure. Addressing organizational effectiveness must also integrate the perspectives and contributions of a variety of other stakeholders and affiliated groups. Resolving structural issues will be challenging but will also present opportunities for greater collaboration, innovation and impact. If the Association, as a whole, is to thrive, the parts must come together and figure out ways to balance the organization's core values with the need to be a vibrant and effective 21<sup>st</sup> century organization. The list of issues to be addressed should include, but not necessarily be limited to: creating an organizational culture that promotes collaboration as opposed to competition and silos; putting "sacred cows" on the table for discussion; reducing redundancies; identifying and implementing best practices and systems improvements; and supporting a much stronger technology infrastructure throughout the organization.

- **Embrace changing membership demographics and the evolving needs of the profession.**

Membership represents both a challenge and opportunity for ALA. Declining membership is a challenge for many professional associations as information, networking and development resources proliferate and become highly specialized. Retaining members also challenges associations to strengthen their value proposition and to rethink and redefine their role and relevance. More segmented approaches to member engagement are needed as members have different needs and interests, are at different stages of their careers, and reflect shifting demographic realities. While equity, diversity and inclusion are central to ALA's core values and represent a recently-adopted strategic goal, diversity goals are far from being fully realized. Concrete actions, including the investment of resources, are needed to move this commitment forward in a meaningful way.

- **Raise the profile of the Association externally and enhance its legislative advocacy efforts at the federal, state and local policymaking levels.**

ALA is expected to fight for social justice, free speech, intellectual freedom, access to information, equity and literacy; to promote the value of libraries; and to champion funding for libraries. The need for vigilance, public outreach and increased action at all levels of government has been galvanized by an increasingly volatile political landscape in which such values are threatened and at risk. While a strong Washington DC office is crucial, it is not sufficient for increased legislative advocacy efforts organization-wide. These efforts need to be embraced by the entire organization with innovative advocacy strategies advanced on multiple levels, including building new alliances and partnerships to expand influence and impact.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

The American Library Association seeks a strong, dynamic, entrepreneurial, and experienced leader to be its next Executive Director. **Candidates will be considered only if they possess an ALA accredited Master's Degree or a CAEP accredited Master's Degree with a specialty in School Library Media.** The following qualifications represent the broad set of experience, knowledge, and personal attributes deemed important for success in this role.

- **Experience**
  - Demonstrated successful, senior management level experience managing a complex library-related organization, leading strategic planning, and implementing significant organizational change. Experience managing in a rapidly changing environment is critical.
  - Successful experience balancing the business and nonprofit, mission-driven sides of an organization. Must have a record of prior involvement in professional association activities, preferably in the area of library and information science.
  - Demonstrated success in fundraising.
  - Proven track record providing strong and capable leadership in managing change; recommending, developing and implementing policy and programs; and mediating or resolving issues among membership, staff, and others.
  - Demonstrated diplomacy and consensus-building experience among diverse constituencies, such as governing bodies, staff, members, and external partners.
  - Cross-cultural experience and sensitivity.
  - A record of achievement and demonstrated leadership skills managing a variety of functions and programs involving volunteers and professional staff.
  - Demonstrated ability to work effectively with a governing board, including the ability to adapt to an elected leadership that changes on an annual basis.
  - Evidence of financial and business sophistication in managing an organization or a significant part of a large organization with multiple funding sources.

- Knowledge of external stakeholders with whom ALA engages including public officials, the media, and community and business leaders.
- Demonstrated proactive experience in promoting diversity and inclusion and working effectively with a diverse workforce and/or population.
  
- **Knowledge**
  - Based on his/her knowledge and experience, take a leadership role in articulating and seeking to advance the interest of libraries and librarianship. Able to demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing libraries and librarianship at the local, state, national and international levels.
  - Deep understanding of and commitment to equitable access to information and intellectual freedom.
  - Deep understanding of the role of ALA in relation to its chapters, divisions, round tables, and affiliates.
  - Strong business and financial acumen.
  - Demonstrated understanding of established and emerging technologies and their applications to information access and delivery to the Association and to its members. Must also understand the policy implications of new technologies and how they affect libraries, intellectual freedom, and access to information. Comfortable and experienced with the use of technology, including social media, to accomplish the mission and goals of an organization.
  
- **Professional and Personal Attributes**
  - Enthusiasm for the mission and goals of the Association.
  - A visionary who can convert vision into strategy and then into concrete action steps.
  - Willingness to listen and learn coupled with a sense of urgency and a bias toward action.
  - Effective outreach and presentation skills to enhance public perception of libraries and to position the Association externally as a credible and influential advocate. Interest in the external dimension of the role and in developing partnerships and initiatives with other organizations.
  - Strong sense of accountability; highest levels of personal and professional integrity.
  - Outstanding communication skills with an ability to listen, speak extemporaneously with a variety of audiences, and inspire others.
  - A management philosophy that emphasizes participation, inclusion, collaboration, consensus-building, trust, transparency, and results.
  - Approachability; ability to connect effectively with a highly diverse set of stakeholders and partners.
  - Intellectual curiosity and broad interests.
  - Adaptability; high tolerance for complexity, change, uncertainty and ambiguity.
  - Good judgment and maturity; high emotional intelligence.
  - High energy, dynamic, optimistic.

- Strategic, creative, and has the ability to promote innovation in others.
- Candid, authentic, healthy ego, ability to manage stress with grace and resilience; a sense of humor.
- Willingness and ability to travel approximately 35% annually, including international travel.

**The ALA will offer a competitive salary based on experience. The ALA offers a comprehensive and valuable benefits package that includes generous paid vacation and retirement annuity.**

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Evaluation of prospective candidates will begin immediately. Applications and nominations should be sent to: <http://www.imsearch.com/searches/details/content/S6-242> . For best consideration, please submit application materials by July 28, 2017.

Inquiries and referrals should be addressed to:

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