



The Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) is the division within the American Library Association (ALA) that speaks to the needs of librarians who work in state agencies, specialized libraries, library cooperatives, and library consultants. It is our sincere hope to also be a home for federal librarians and librarians who serve the nation's military service members. This document proposes a merger between ASCLA and the Federal and Armed Forces Libraries Round Table (FAFLRT). It describes the advantages of ASCLA as a home for federal librarians within ALA, and outlines the next steps for the potential merger.

About ASCLA

Being a small division within ALA gives ASCLA members special benefits. Any ASCLA member has the ability to quickly join interest groups, committees, and boards early on and begin to make an impact within the division and the wider ALA community.

ASCLA provides exceptional networking and educational opportunities for its members. In 2016, ASCLA will offer ten programming opportunities at the ALA annual conference and approximately eight or more online learning opportunities throughout the year.¹

ASCLA currently has eighteen interest groups that provide advocacy and learning opportunities for members of the division. These interest groups also draft standards and compile resources for their membership, the broader library community, and other interested parties.

As opposed to a Round Table—which is entirely volunteer operated—ASCLA has a committed professional staff. Staffing consists of an Executive Director, a Marketing and Program Director, and a Web Services Manager. All of these staff members work tirelessly on behalf of the membership of the division and make themselves quickly available to answer questions or address issues. While programming is membership-driven, ASCLA staff avail themselves to assist with the division's programs, preconferences and institutes at ALA conferences and events. ASCLA staff also work with division members to coordinate and promote our many online learning opportunities.

In addition, ASCLA staff work on the fundraising aspects of the organization so members can focus more on programming, writing standards, and networking. One of ASCLA's major fundraising ventures is an annual overseas excursion. Our last three were to Scotland, French/Italian Rivas and Madrid. In 2016, ASCLA began publishing a calendar featuring professional photos of library users and has key dates for ALA events highlighted throughout the year. We plan to continue this promotion in 2017.

¹ Find a full listing of ASCLA's conference programs and online learning opportunities from the following links:
Annual Conference Programs: <http://www.ala.org/ascla/asclaevents/annual>.
Online Learning Programs: <http://www.ala.org/ascla/asclaevents/onlinelearning/onlinelearning>.

ASCLA Currently has a budget of \$116,849. ASCLA's membership consists of 814 members and is growing. While other ALA divisions have maintained or lost members, ASCLA is the only division within ALA that has demonstrated consistent growth throughout the past two years.

The Current Situation

Federal and armed forces librarians play a vital role in the nation by curating information for the public and assisting federal agencies with their important information needs. Armed forces libraries are an essential component to our national security by maintaining current and accurate information for our military leaders. What is more, these military librarians are also in many cases the public librarians for US service personnel on military bases. Their importance was recently highlighted in a resolution brought to ALA Council by FAFLRT Councilor Vicky Crone calling for the restoration of funding for Air Force libraries.² These libraries and librarians need a voice within ALA.

However, on December 16, 2015 in an open letter to FAFLRT membership titled *FAFLRT in Crisis: Shall we Disband*, FAFLRT leadership cited the Round Table's declining membership and lack of volunteers to serve on its governing board. The letter stated that if membership and leadership problems could not be addressed, FAFLRT may dissolve. While FAFLRT was able to find volunteers to serve its leadership roles this year, the underlying problems remain. Federal and armed forces librarians are too important not to be represented in ALA and ASCLA hopes to be a home for federal and armed forces librarians.

Why ASCLA?

ASCLA is an ideal division for FAFLRT members. ASCLA's current relationship with state libraries and state librarians represents a model for how FAFLRT members would be incorporated into the new division. State library agencies are a more localized model of libraries on the federal level. Many of FAFLRT's federal librarians have positions that are analogous to those in state libraries. This would represent an opportunity for networking and sharing of ideas among members with similar interests—at both the state and federal levels—that would not be found in any other division within ALA.

FAFLRT members represent a diverse body of librarians who would feel welcome in a division with librarians who serve unique populations of users. Currently, ASCLA members include (but are not limited to) librarians who work in prisons, special libraries, librarians who serve people with disabilities, librarians who serve Native Americans living on reservations, cooperative library agencies, and library consultants.

² Council of the American Library Association (2014, June). Resolution in support of stable funding for Air Force libraries. *Council Documents Midwinter/Annual Conference 2014*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2014_annual_conference_documents/cd_43_resol_n_suppt_%20of%20airforce_libs_62814_act.pdf.

What is more, ASLCA's interest groups cover topics such as collaborative digitization, consortial management, and interlibrary loans. Because federal librarians oversee the digitization of millions of public records and share information through a variety of channels (such as FEDLINK) these subjects speak to the everyday workings of federal librarians.

As briefly mentioned above, ASCLA also is the home for librarians who serve people who are incarcerated. Currently, all federal prison facilities maintain two libraries, one for leisure and one for legal resources.³ Librarians who work in these institutions would benefit from the cross collaboration with the librarians who work in state prison facilities found within ASCLA.

In addition, ASLCA recently added a Consumer Health Information Librarians Interest Group. Members of this new interest group are themselves federal librarians who work with the National Library of Medicine.

Finally, because ASCLA is the division for librarians who work with people who are blind or visually impaired, many staff members of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped—a division of the Library of Congress—are ASCLA members.

Possible Structure for the New Division

If FAFLRT were to merge with ASCLA, the ASCLA and FAFLRT leadership would work together to draft a mission statement, by-laws, and new possible name for the division that would comprehensively suit the interests of the new organization. Two new interest groups would be created within ASCLA for federal and armed forces librarians. Further, ASCLA would add at least two additional seats on the Board of Directors: one for Federal Librarians and one Armed Forces Librarians. There is the possibility of also adding an additional At-Large seat on the Board to better represent the interests of the larger membership. This would maintain the voice of federal and armed forces librarians within ALA.

In anticipation of a possible merger, FAFLRT and ASCLA members are already collaborating to offer programs at the ALA Annual Conference in 2017. ASCLA is looking forward to our joint networking reception and Awards Ceremony in Orlando where members of both organizations will have the opportunity to introduce themselves to each other.

Conclusion

ASCLA now officially proposes to FAFLRT that FAFLRT join with ASCLA beginning at the conclusion of the 2017 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. ASLCA leadership believes that our two organizations serve librarians with similar interests and that the ASCLA division is the best fit for FAFLRT membership with the American Library Association.

³ Zoukis, C. (2013, June 10). Library services in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. *Prison Law Blog*. Retrieved from <http://www.prisonlawblog.com/blog/library-services-federal-bureau-prisons#.VwURmkZnHiE>

We would appreciate a response from FAFLRT leadership as to whether FAFLRT is willing to proceed with the merger process by May 1, 2016.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA):

Rhonda K. Gould
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