

From ALCTS to Core

Something (Actually a Lot!) to Celebrate!

Jennifer Bowen

While attending my first meeting of the ALCTS Executive Committee in April 2018, I learned about an idea being advanced by the executive directors of ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA, that the three divisions consider joining forces to create a single ALA division. Their rationale was that this action would provide better value for members of all three divisions, enabling collaboration and staffing efficiencies across administrative silos within ALA. Since the three divisions were slowly but continuously losing members, joining would proactively address the looming concern that the separate divisions would become financially unsustainable as their membership declined.

ALCTS, LITA, and LLAMA are similar in that these divisions have focused on the type of work done in libraries. Such divisions have enabled members interested in specific library activities to easily find their “home” within the larger ALA organization, facilitating collaborations with others with similar interests across all types of libraries. Additionally, many ALCTS members have sought a broader ALA experience by joining multiple divisions of this type. This has been my personal experience, as I have been a member of both LITA and LLAMA in addition to ALCTS at different points in my career. As the leadership of all three divisions discussed the possibility of creating a new division, we speculated about whether it was possible to create a division to support both of these models: the needs of members who specializes throughout their career, plus the needs of members who wants to build competencies and professional networks across multiple functional areas. And, could such a new division also anticipate the emerging needs of library professionals?

It has been over two years since that meeting where I first heard about forming a new division—and that new division is now coming to fruition with the creation of **Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures**. It is my hope, and that of many others who worked to create Core, that this new division will empower its members to work seamlessly across functional areas, and that the division’s structure will be easily adaptable to address emerging needs and trends.

As the days of ALCTS begin to wind down, we have a lot to celebrate, in terms of what ALCTS has accomplished through its members and staff. As ALCTS members, we built competencies that enabled us to be successful at our home institutions, developed networks of colleagues to consult for advice and support, and formed friendships that have lasted for decades. Together, we accomplished projects and developed standards that have advanced the development of library collections. ALCTS publications have created a scholarly record that underpins the essential work of technical services in libraries. I am proud to have been an ALCTS member throughout its entire existence since it was

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created from the former Resources and Technical Services Division of ALA in 1989. I am now also proud to celebrate becoming a member of Core.

As Core becomes a reality on September 1, 2020, we should also celebrate the work of everyone involved in bringing it into existence. This includes leaders, members, and staff of all three divisions, and especially the division members who voted overwhelmingly to create Core. Our efforts to create Core have been praised for addressing head-on issues with ALA divisions' sustainability, and as a possible model for modernizing other parts of ALA—this is indeed something of which to be proud!

While we do not yet know whether Core will successfully address the emerging needs of our profession, it is not premature for us to celebrate this, too! From a collections perspective at least, Core has positioned us to accomplish exactly what libraries need to do next. We are learning from the COVID pandemic that if we lack physical access to our collections, we must make our collections accessible remotely as quickly and completely as possible. Within Core, we can

work collaboratively to develop the competencies we need, adapting our standards, protocols, and practices in support of this goal. We can work with IT experts to develop the digital infrastructure appropriate to our evolving environment, and learn from other colleagues how to develop our leadership skills, especially in regard to change and risk management. In Core, we will soon have pathways to do all this more seamlessly within ALA, supported by a fluid organization that will enable these and other profession-wide priorities.

Finally—and I mean finally not as an afterthought but as something so fundamental that it deserves the final word—we can celebrate that we have created a new division based upon key values of diversity and inclusion. We have the opportunity to use our new ALA home to ensure that we support these values ourselves through our library collections and through our professional activities and collaborations. We should celebrate this transition to Core as a way to ensure our future professional effectiveness in support of libraries, library collections, library staff, and of equitable access to library collections for our communities.