


Jan 25th, 10:20 AM - 10:35 AM

# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations

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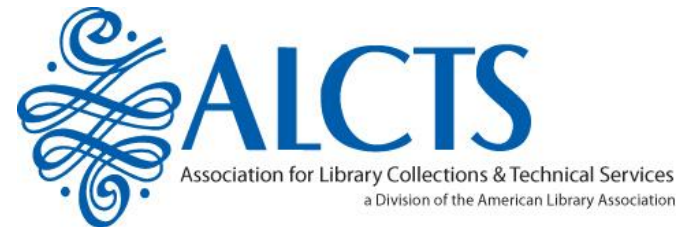
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Department of Library Technical Services

# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations

## Start local

- Seek out WKU College and University level committees to gain experience
  - Also a great way to meet colleagues outside of the library
- WKU Libraries Dean's office maintains list of library committees
  - Remember you can request to be added or wait-listed for committees



# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations

## State/regional organizations



### – Kentucky Library Association

- Serve on committees with your WKU colleagues to learn the ropes
- Branch out; look for service that will connect you to regional or national organizations

### – Southeastern Library Association

- Apply for conference scholarships
- Attend conferences and network with professionals outside of Kentucky



# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations

## American Library Association (ALA)

### – Start with New Members Round Table (NMRT)

- Serve on committees
- Volunteer to chair the committee
- Run for Director to oversee multiple committees
- Other than president, my most valuable NMRT experience was co-chair of Scholarship Research Committee
  - Charged with looking for avenues for NMRT members to peer-review publish
  - Results were creating a NMRT peer-review publication from the ground-up: *EndNotes*



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## Look for ways to make connections

- Once I began traveling to China, I became NMRT liaison to International Relations Round Table (IRRT)
  - Network, network, network
    - As I stood in line for a book signing met some who suggested I connect with the nonprofit Apple Tree Library Foundation (ATLF) which sends English juvenile materials to libraries in China
  - My involvement with ATLF led to my ALA conference poster presentation on my research
    - In turn, I served as committee member on the IRRT poster committee for 2 years then chaired for 2 years



# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations



## Stay active

- After service in NMRT ended, I attended a few Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) conference/online events and found it fit well with my work and interests
  - Attended ALCTS 101 at conference and was fun and friendly
    - After event talked with officers and volunteered to serve as social media coordinator
    - Eventually chaired ALCTS New Member Interest Group for two years
  - ALCTS 101 event co-sponsored with ALCTS Membership Committee
    - Did a good job with ALCTS 101, so was asked to serve on Membership Committee
    - Next, asked to chair the committee and will rotate off this year

# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations

## **Internships are a great way to get involved**

### – Varying degrees of responsibilities

- Most likely will be appointed to take notes during the meetings
- After you complete internship, request to become a full committee member
- Look for ways to stay involved
  - I became friends with the ALA Awards Committee staff member and have been included in the ALA awards jury rotation since 2011



# Becoming Active in Professional Organizations

## Random advice

- Professional organization activities should make sense to who you are and what you do. Not just a box to tick off on your evaluation.
- You'll be surprised how involvement in one organization/committee will lead or intertwine with your next experience.
- Tempting to volunteer to serve on committee that doesn't do much.
  - Pros: gives you something to include on your annual evaluation and P&T document
  - Cons: don't gain any skills and/or knowledge
- Say yes more than you say no, but know your time and skill limitations.
  - I said no to KLA Academic Section President due to time restraints
- Seek out leadership roles. I never expected to be elected NMRT president – it was a journey where the next level of involvement made sense to me.
- No doubt that my service in these professional organizations, and being given the chance to be a leader, directly affected my confidence and leadership skills as I serve as a department head. I had wonderful, but also very trying experiences, to draw from. I learned how to work with a variety of personalities, mainly virtually, and navigate and resolve sometimes difficult situations.
- Professional development should be a two-way street. The organization benefits from your time and energy spent to further their cause and you should benefit by learning more about our profession and gaining new skills and honing your leadership abilities. A win-win for all.