

TRANSITION TO CLA INTEREST GROUPS: A TOOLKIT FOR CURRENT SECTIONS, ROUND TABLES AND COMMITTEES

As you are probably aware, CLA membership recently approved revisions to the CLA bylaws that will create significant changes in the structural organization of the Association. One of the most significant changes pertains to currently existing sections, committees, and round tables. When the by-laws changes take effect on July 1, 2009, the terms “Section” and “Round Table” will no longer be used in CLA. In addition, while there will be some standing committees, the term “Committee” will also no longer be used. These entities will be replaced with the new term, “Interest Groups.”

Interest Groups are designed to be more fluid, less bureaucratic, and more relevant to current interests of members. They can be formed by type of library, type of activity, a special interest (about anything!) or a geographic area. Any voting member of the Association is eligible for membership in an Interest Group.

Interest Groups will be subject to the rules of the Association, must have a defined leader and must relate to the mission of CLA. When transitioning to an Interest Group, currently existing sections, round tables, most committees and other formal groups, will have no requirements to have officers. In addition, these groups will retain any funds that are in their accounts on June 30, 2009, and will continue to be able to request funds from CLA for such activities as workshops and conference programs.

Interest groups may meet in person, by phone, via email, or virtually. The technology to host virtual groups similar to PLA’s PLAspace is not yet in place at the CLA offices. A technology task force is researching options to support this, but there is no date for implementation at the time of the release of this document. Rollout of virtual group participation will be done with much fanfare, so stay tuned for this.

As with any transition, there are sure to be questions and the need for clarification. We hope that the FAQs below provide you with the answers you need. If not, please contact current CLA President, Barbara Roberts. (see contact information below.)

We appreciate your patience and your enthusiasm as we move forward with a newly organized CLA!

FAQs

When do the CLA bylaws changes go into effect?

Officially, July 1, 2009. However, even though the new name designations take effect then, the actual work to morph into an Interest Group certainly can be done at the pace that best works for each group. However, by July 1, 2010 all transitions must be complete.

How will the new bylaws affect current sections, committees and round tables?

To continue to exist as organizational bodies within CLA, sections and round tables will have to transition in name to Interest Groups as of July 1, 2009. The groups should also have begun working toward establishing any differences in their structure and meeting methods.

What's the transition deadline?

July 1, 2010. However, after July 1, 2009, sections, most committees and round tables will no longer exist as such under CLA's revised bylaws.

How soon can we make the transition?

Transition can begin immediately. All sections, committees and round tables should be having discussions about how they wish to operate under the new bylaws. Until the technology is in place, virtual participation will come at a later date. In the meantime, sections and round tables can function and communicate as they always have if they wish, or choose phone, email or other ways to meet. Each Interest Group that is established must designate a Contact Person. Current presidents, chairs and leaders may remain as the new Interest Group contact person, unless the group decides to change the Contact Person. Once it is established that you will become an Interest Group, please contact the CLA office with the Contact Person's name.

What will the mechanism look like for a virtual Interest Group?

Although this is still being investigated, we're envisioning a website (similar to the Public Library Association's PLAspace) where you can create and operate your Interest Group electronically. More information on this will be forthcoming.

What will happen to section and round table treasuries once they become Interest Groups?

Groups can retain any funds that are in their accounts on June 30, 2009. If the section or round table does not transition to an Interest Group by June 30, 2010, the money will be absorbed into CLA's general funds. Groups will have their existing funds to use toward conference programming or other activities until June 29, 2010. Please contact the CLA office to obtain allocation balances.

Can sections and round tables still propose conference programs even though they will no longer exist after July 1?

Yes because it is important to remember that while the structure is changing, the memberships of the groups remain and CLA encourages active participation!

How can sections, round tables or Interest Groups submit recommendations for conference track workshops and/or keynote speakers?

Conference program proposals can be submitted via the CLA website at: <http://cla2009.abstractcentral.com/>. All group proposals must be signed off by the group's Contact Person. To discuss a workshop or conference idea or recommend a speaker for the 2009 conference, please feel free to contact Conference Planning Committee chair Cindy Mediavilla at cmediavi@ucla.edu.

Who can form an Interest Group?

Two or more CLA members who share a common interest either by type of library (e.g., academic libraries, public libraries, school libraries, etc.), type of activity (e.g., reference, youth services, technical services, etc.), special interest (e.g., intellectual freedom, Second Life, library history, knitters, etc.), or geographic area can form a new Interest Group. All Interest Groups must meet the mission of CLA, and follow the ALA Code of Ethics. Each Interest Group must identify a Contact Person who will register with CLA.

Who can belong to Interest Groups?

All voting CLA members may join as many Interest Groups as they wish, and two or more member can start a new Interest Group at any time. Members may join or drop out of an Interest Group whenever they wish.

Once formed, what are the obligations of an Interest Group?

According to the new bylaws, Interest Groups are to: further CLA's mission; perform the duties listed in the bylaws and soon-to-be-revised CLA standing rules; conduct business in accordance with CLA guidelines; name a Contact Person and report that name to CLA; and demonstrate activity.

What does "demonstrate activity" mean?

Interest Groups will "demonstrate activity" the same way that current sections, committees and round tables currently demonstrate activity in one or more of the following ways: sponsoring conference programs and/or other events throughout the year; maintaining an active electronic list; maintaining an active website; producing a regular newsletter; etc. More details about ways in which Interest Groups can remain active will be made available as soon as the technology methods are in place.

Will Interest Groups have to create bylaws, etc.?

Interest Groups will not be required to create their own bylaws and/or standing rules. However, CLA will not prohibit groups from having their own bylaws, statements of purpose, standing rules, etc., as long as they do not conflict with CLA's bylaws and other governing documents.

Is an Interest Group required to name a Contact Person?

The only requirement is that each Interest Group name a Contact Person to answer members' questions and receive communication from CLA. However, CLA will not prohibit groups from having officers, such as a chair, vice-chair, secretary, etc., if they so choose. The Interest Group Contact Person and officers will be selected internally and not through the CLA election process.

What rights and privileges will Interest Groups have?

Interest Groups may recommend policies, standards, and candidates for CLA office by working through the new Board of Directors. Interest Groups may also receive certain services from CLA, such as website space, membership lists, and assistance with various methods of communication. Interest Groups may request CLA funds for special projects, conference programs and workshops.

What communication tools will be available to Interest Groups?

The IT Task Force is in the process of developing a list of tools to address specific communication needs, such as the ability of new interest groups to participate virtually, and best ways to communicate with new members other than e-mail. The IT Task Force will be making recommendations to the Executive Committee in April.

What will happen to awards currently given by sections?

One Awards Committee is being created to handle all CLA awards. The Chair of the new Awards Committee will work with all Interest Groups that wish to give an award.

What procedures does an Interest Group need to follow if they wish to be dissolved or are to be dissolved?

The Organization and Bylaws Committee will address dissolution procedures in their Standing Rules at a later date.

What do I do if I have further questions?

If you have further questions the revised bylaws, available on the CLA website, are the best first place to start. The Standing Rules, currently under revision will also give information and will be posted on the website when they are completed. If you have immediate questions, contact current CLA President, Barbara Roberts: barbara.roberts@palmssprings-ca.gov or 760-322-8375.