

ESTABLISHING A VIETNAMESE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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It goes without saying that we live in a complex information-rich world. One in which information has become a precious commodity, now shared in a digital marketplace where it is more accessible than ever before.

Librarians and libraries have long been the information experts. Searching through books, documents, and other sources to find the information that people need to become successful educationally, to succeed in business and solve day-to-day life problems. Many of us became librarians in a different information world that in no way resembles the one in which we live and work everyday. However, let me be quick to say that I am in no way mourning the past.

To me this is the most exciting time ever to be a librarian.

The challenges in developing new models for library and information access are endless and the opportunities to cement our role as leaders in information provision and open access better than ever before.

We must ask ourselves how we can accomplish this.

One of the ways we can best achieve our goals as a profession is through our professional associations. By working together under a single umbrella organization we can develop a collective voice that allows us to achieve together what we can't do alone.

I have been a member of the American Library Association since I was a library school student back in 1974. I've served on and chaired many ALA committees, served as a division president and now president, and been a member of the ALA governing council. I've also served as president of two of our "state" associations and been involved in regional library associations. I know that the time invested in association participation comes back to my library many, many times over in terms of positive results and enhancements to my career.

We must use our professional associations as a way to advance the agenda of libraries and librarians in our societies.

I am so pleased to hear that you are forming a Vietnamese Library Association. Having an association will provide you with a forum to discuss and debate many of the topics we touched upon during yesterday's session.

Let me offer some tips on getting started and talk about some of the real values you will find through having a library association here in Vietnam.

Getting Started

Determine Your Mission

ALA Mission

The mission of the American Library Association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information to all.

This is a very broad, inclusive mission statement that appeals to all types of libraries and librarian interests.

Determine the Structure and Governance of the Organization

You may need to approach this in several stages: start-up structure and then a more formal structure once you have some experience. Just some of the things to consider:

- *Who will be in charge of the day to day activities?*
- *Who will make decisions on behalf of the association's members?*
- *How will the leaders be selected? Length of terms, composition of the group, etc.*
- *Will there be personal and organizational dues and if so, in what amount?*
- *When will the association meet to conduct business?*
- *Will you need Bylaws/rules for conducting business?*
- *Will you offer a conference for your members?*

Remember, there are many details to work out when starting an organization. It's not always easy to move from an informal organization to a formal organization but stick with it because there can be important results. And the good news is that there are many other library associations to which you can look for guidance. Use the resources of IFLA, ALA and other library associations to help guide your decisions.

Now let's move to the Value and Benefit of Library Associations.

I suspect you know all of this since you've made the decision to form an association of your own. But let me talk about what I think are the real benefits of participating in an library association.

Library Associations:

- Provide a focal point for best practices and standards
- Offer a place to share information both formally and informally with colleagues, to learn what's new in each others libraries, what works and what didn't work. It's a great opportunity to "network" with your colleagues.
- Provide members with the ability to improve their knowledge and skills through continuing education, training, institutes and seminars.
- Can develop "core values" to guide librarians in their day-to-day work. In the US, ALA provides statements about intellectual freedom, the freedom to read, view, and listen, privacy and confidentiality
- Help promote and advance libraries through marketing and advertising campaigns that might not be possible to support in an individual library budget
- Offer advocacy and political action on behalf of library interests. ALA represents our interests with government to secure funding for libraries, pass favorable legislation and policy towards the development and funding of libraries and librarians and speaks out against legislation or policy that is unfavorable to libraries. Through ALA we build broad based public support for libraries through our advocacy training. In the US, I am certain that were it not for ALA, libraries of all types would not have the support and representation needed at the national level to speak out on behalf of our interests.

We don't always agree with each other on the details but we are willing to work out the problems and more than happy to support our Washington office to lobby and represent our concerns to congress and policy makers.

- Promote and protect civil liberties
- Offer resources to support libraries and librarians
- Advance your career
- Voice in shaping the future of librarianship and practice
- Help you keep up with trends and products
- Create a collective strength and memory for the practice of librarianship in your country

Let me talk a little about the advocacy and lobbying efforts ALA is making on behalf of libraries of all types. With its Washington Office, ALA is a key player in monitoring and shaping information policy that potentially affects libraries. We

invest significant resources in our lobbying and advocacy efforts on behalf of our members and the millions of people who use libraries.

This efforts is essential important in our new world of information. At lunch a few days ago we shared stories about the changing legal landscape as it pertains to free access to information, copyright, fair use, digital rights. These are complicated issues that are spurring new legislation and regulations in the US. The issues are complicated – balancing the public's right to know with the protection of intellectual property.

ALA has been effective as an organization in shaping social policy with regard to information access and protecting user privacy.

USA Patriot Act

Many of you know that after September 11, 2001 there was a quick reaction from our government to apprehend the terrorists responsible for the attack and to enact legislation that extended powers to investigate foreign nationals as well as those us citizens suspected of terrorist activities. The USA Patriot Act provided broad investigative powers to the federal and local law enforcement beyond current statute and laws. Under provisions of the act the FBI could request business, medical and library records without search warrants if they were investigating suspected terrorist activities. ALA worked successfully with a coalition of business and congressional leaders to advocate for reforms in the act to protect the privacy of library patrons.

Internet filtering

Internet filtering has been a hot issue in the US. Many groups are concerned that without filtering software children will be exposed to pornographic or objectionable materials, The library community is concerned that current filtering software blocks constitutionally protected speech. Again working in coalition with a broad group ALA brought suit against the government to stop legislation that would require libraries to install Internet filtering software, We were successful in one case and unsuccessful in another.

Intellectual Freedom

The Digital Age presents new challenges to fundamental copyright doctrines that are legal cornerstones of library services. Libraries are leaders in trying to maintain a balance of power between copyright holders and users, in keeping with the fundamental principles outlined in the Constitution and carefully crafted over the past 200 years. In this role, we closely follow both federal and state legislation and make our voices heard when our issues are moving. Libraries are perceived as a voice for the public good and our participation is often sought in "friend of the court" briefs in important intellectual property cases. Our involvement extends to

the international copyright arena where we also follow the treaties to which the U.S. is a signatory and which could influence the development of copyright changes at home.

Copyright Issues

Copyright issues are among the most hotly contested issues in the legal and legislative world; billions of dollars are at stake. Legal principles and technological capabilities are constantly challenging each other and every outcome can directly affect the future of libraries. Copyright is a very complicated area of law but one that has the potential to effect the way every library conducts business.

Telecommunications and Technology

ALA's Washington Office remains active on many telecommunications legislative and policy fronts. It addresses regulatory, research and long-term policy implications of universal service, the E-rate, Internet policies, copyright and other issues.

Because of the increasing reliance upon and need for libraries to use broadband telecommunications services, ALA follows broadband deployment and build out issues closely, focusing especially on accessibility, affordability and universal service concerns.

ALA worked with an informal but broad coalition that succeeded in eliminating a proposal that would have prohibited localities from building public broadband networks.

In some states, as well as the national level, corporate entities are pushing congressional and state legislators to pass laws prohibiting such public networks (notably the Pennsylvania state law.) ALA agrees with a coalition of organizations that options should remain open for local governments to have choices, especially when the private sector is not willing to provide appropriate broadband access.

CALEA

The Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA), passed in October 1994, forces telecommunications carriers to comply with law enforcements' wiretapping requests. We are concerned that this may apply to libraries

E-rate

E-rate is the popular name for a far-sighted extension of Universal Service authorized by Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This federal initiative provides discounts to public libraries and to public and private K-12

schools on telecommunications services, Internet access and some closely related costs, such as inside wiring. The discounts range from 20% to 90% with the deepest discounts going to those communities with the greatest need based upon the local eligibility levels for participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The E-rate has played a pivotal role in helping libraries connect their users to the Internet.. With more than \$350 million in discounts since 1998, the E-rate has helped change the public library's information technology landscape.

Internet

Some say no one governs the Internet-that, in fact, the Internet is ungovernable. "Cyberspace" is a new form of social and technological organization that transcends geopolitical boundaries and confounds attempts of traditional governments to regulate it.

But all social and technical systems (the Internet is both) operate under rules, and commercial providers and governments who need a more secure environment for their applications will develop the Internet into a more controllable technological environment. The library community must be in the forefront of monitoring and speaking out against any attempts to limit information on the net..

Funding for Libraries and Librarians

ALA plays an instrumental role in securing federal dollars to support libraries. LSTA, HEA, No Child Left Behind, Katrina Disaster fund

The Role of a Professional Association in today's information society

So back to the original question – what is the benefit of a professional association in the information society?