

Council E-list Items of Potential Interest to IFRT

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Since Midwinter several IF-related issues have been discussed on the Council listserv. The USAPatriot Act and its extensions and imitations have been condemned but I am not seeing any specific ALA action being proposed. Smithsonian commercialization was condemned and may inspire a resolution. Discussion of the Danish cartoons of Mohammad never seemed to coalesce into a position.

More likely to generate a resolution is the Net neutrality issue as there are now competing bills in Congress. The question is whether those who can pay for it would be allowed to buy superior access for their websites, thus relegating the democracy-in-action aspect of the Internet cited in the CDA decision to second class status.

Two ALA entities were the subject of much debate. The new AL Direct online magazine has used polls to generate interest and interactivity. Some of those polls have questioned ALA policy or treated IF issues as yes/no choices. These polls raised the ire of some councilors while others have viewed their objections as infringing on freedom of the press. There hasn't been any comment recently on this but it may come up in a Council session.

Secondly, relations between ALA's youth-serving divisions and the Boy Scouts were questioned. ALSC once worked quite closely with the BSA on their Merit Badge book lists, but when the BSA chose to exclude gays, ALA chose to dissolve any formal relationship. The questions are whether this dissolution is complete and whether ALA has any hope of persuading BSA to change its policy.

Council issues less directly related to IF include several issues with federal government actions from de-funding EPA libraries, to LC giving up authority control, to a proposed IMLS NCLIS merger. I expect to see resolutions on these. Council members have also continued to be concerned about the viability of our APA, its projects and its funding. The resignation of Councilor Schneider brought up a discussion of the costs of ALA participation with proposals ranging from more e-participation to stipends. I don't expect any action on this with the dues increase so recently approved.

Finally, an unfortunate brouhaha has developed over Project Vote Smart. PVS, which produces neutral information on Congressional voting records and candidates' positions, sent participating librarians like myself an email saying that because ALA's president had not responded to a request for endorsement PVS would discontinue supplying libraries. ALA's President Gorman, who had in fact not been contacted, responded vehemently and things have gone from bad to worse. I believe Executive Director Fiels is trying to patch things up but PVS is saying it is too late. I myself responded to the PVS email by asking them why ALA endorsement should suddenly become an issue as it is not in any position of governance over public libraries, but I have had no response. I am wondering if this is all a smokescreen for something else.

This will be my last conference as your Councilor. I thank you for your trust in me and confidently turn your interests over to Sylvia Turchyn who will become IFRT Councilor at the close of the conference. I also invite you to come and watch a Council session – that’s how I first fell in love with ALA.