

The Mission of the Nebraska Library Association

“The Nebraska Library Association supports and promotes all libraries, library media centers and library services in the state. Its foremost concerns are the professional development of its members, library advocacy, and open access to information for all citizens.”

The NLA ad-hoc Membership Committee first met in May 2020 and continued to meet monthly via Zoom and communicate through email. Committee members include Jennifer Lockwood (Gretna Public Library), Christie Clarke (Gering Public Library), Cali Biaggi (Doane University), and Anneka Ramirez (chair, Norfolk Public Library). The committee focused on examining all programs, policies, and procedures related to NLA membership to develop a plan to build a consistent and sustainable path to recruit and retain passionate and active members.

Using interviews with section and round table leaders, results from the Communication Committee’s 2020 survey and the Our NLA 2017 strategic planning survey, the Committee examined attitudes and perceptions of NLA membership from members and non-members.

We found common threads from the survey and interview data that indicate a lack of clear communication between the executive board, section/round table/committee chairs, and the membership as a whole which has led to a feeling of disconnect and apathy within the organizational culture.

The recommendations outlined below are not listed in order of priority; however, it is the Committee’s opinion that establishing tangible benefits and clearly communicating roles of leadership is a key initial component to driving a better-connected membership. It should fall to the Executive Board to determine which existing committee, roundtable, or section will be responsible for implementing the below suggestions, and/or if a new committee is needed.

In each one of the Committee’s recommendations, we can ask these foundational questions: How does NLA create, support, and sustain an equitable, diverse, and inclusive community for Nebraska librarians? How do we create belonging for each other? These questions can help shift focus from membership growth to community building for the Association.

Communication

Members found a lack of communication at all levels. Building a strong foundation of communication will make members better understand how to interact and become active in the organization.

Create a Vision and Values Statement.

- Use this to brand NLA's work
- Differentiate NLA from the Commission and Systems

Develop a marketing plan using in-person/mail/online methods to stay consistently connected to members.

- Evaluate email open rate, web traffic, social media analytics
- Use target mailings to reach out to non-professionals and other library staff who may be difficult to reach due to geography or other factors.

Bring clarity into the new member process.

- How does NLA support NMRT's work?
 - Elect mentor for the group to work closely with Past Chair and Chair
- Create an organizational map so members understand the structure and can see themselves in it.
- Mail/Email welcome messages and introductory information to all new members and for all round tables and sections

Onboard new section, round table, and committee leaders.

- Organize a yearly virtual or in-person retreat for incoming, current, and outgoing NLA leaders

Improve the information available on the website and keep it up-to-date.

- Add summaries of executive and board meetings
- Make the Member Area Login a quick link so it is always easily found
- Re-vision the Join page
 - Organize the information so it is less scrolling and blocks of text

Benefits/Cost

Connect members to the benefits given versus received/perceived. NLA needs to overcome the sentiment that the cost of membership outweighs the benefits received. The following is a list of ideas to infuse membership with tangible value.

Create innovative Professional Development opportunities.

- Create a Speakers Bureau related to librarianship
 - Maintain a list of library professionals and related expertise for use by NLA members for professional development opportunities
- Develop a grant for sections/round tables to bring speakers to programs
- Promote resources to help librarians choose materials that accurately represent and are created by underrepresented groups
- Provide help with or information about resumé writing and job-searching tips/techniques
- Provide opportunities to build technology skills

Benefits/Cost, cont.

Hold more professional networking opportunities in-person and virtually.

Create a Leadership Institute and/or Mentorship Program.

Publish a newsletter and include membership profiles, board members introductions, library volunteer highlights, a message from the executive director, and summaries of meetings held since the previous issue.

Provide communication channels for members other than conference, i.e. listserv.

Advocacy

NLA's advocacy efforts on behalf of all Nebraska libraries is a benefit that can strengthen membership and be used to differentiate the Association from the Commission and Systems.

Develop advocacy activities that can be done outside of Lincoln.

- Postcard and/or letter writing campaign
- Highlight the work of community advocates in NLA social media and communication