

# ONE VOICE POLICY CHALLENGED

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# ***ALA/OLOS Memorandum***

**Equal access to information in libraries for all of America's populations**

**Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS)**

DATE: July 11, 2002  
TO: Rory Litwin, Coordinators, ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)  
FROM: Satia Orange, ALA Liaison to SRRT

Dear Rory:

Thanks for getting back with me earlier this week. As agreed, I am sending this message as confirmation of our conversation.

My call, as the ALA staff liaison to the Social Responsibilities Round Table, was to register my concern re: the dissemination of a recent SRRT resolution to the press. As you and I discussed, the American Library Association's policy is clear about adherence to its policies by its round tables. You are aware that ALA's policy is that round tables and their members do not speak with the press on behalf of the Association.

To be specific, a member of the SRRT International Relations Task Force provided the resolution, "Destruction of Palestinian Libraries, Archives, and Other Cultural Institutions" to JTA, the Global News Service of the Jewish Community. You indicated that the decision to decimate this resolution to the press was unanimous at the SRRT Action Council in Atlanta a few weeks ago.

Issuing unofficial documents regarding ALA resolutions and decisions can confuse Association membership and the public's awareness of ALA policies. Also, such actions may undermine ALA's credibility and its ability to implement meaningful actions on behalf of the organization.

Please ask the task force website manager to link to the ALA Council-approved resolution of the same name at <http://www.ala.org/work/international/resolutiononpalestinianlibraries.html>, instead of to a SRRT web page. Again, the resolution on the identified website confirms ALA's official resolution.

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## Memo

DATE: August 17, 2002

TO: Satia Orange, ALA Liaison to SRRT

FROM: Rory Litwin, SRRT Coordinator

CC: Keith Michael Fiels, ALA Executive Director

This memo is my response to your memo of July 11<sup>th</sup>, regarding the so-called “dissemination of a recent SRRT resolution to the press.”

First I will address the specific events in question. Following that, I will state, for the record, my own views and my understanding, as SRRT Coordinator, of the consensus among the SRRT leadership regarding the “Speaking with One Voice Policy.”

I am CC-ing the Executive Director after first consulting you about the appropriateness of doing this. I understand that it is not the Executive Director’s responsibility to set or interpret policy, and that any actions taken by ALA regarding SRRT’s alleged failure to abide by ALA policies would not be the Executive Director’s to take. However, it is part of my charge as SRRT Coordinator to “maintain a working relationship with the ALA Executive Director.” As we in SRRT regard this as one of the more important issues facing us, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to inform Mr. Fiels of our perspective. You acknowledged that this is reasonable.

Regarding the events following the passage of the ALA Council Resolution “Resolution on the Destruction of Palestinian Libraries, Archives, and Other Cultural Institutions,” I would first like to correct a significant factual error in your memo. Your memo began by explaining that your earlier telephone call to me was to register your concern “re: the dissemination of a recent SRRT resolution to the press.” It may turn out to be a minor detail, but in fact Tom Twiss, the author of the original draft of the ALA Council resolution and the SRRT resolution in question, did not disseminate the SRRT resolution to the press, nor had anyone else in SRRT by the time of your call. The JTA news service had obtained a copy of his resolution at the membership meeting, where it was distributed by ALA. Tom later provided the news service with a copy of the ALA Council resolution, faxed to him by an ALA Councilor, and further advised them to approach ALA directly for an official copy. According to Tom, he did NOT provide the JTA with the SRRT resolution nor the almost identical version which he brought to the ALA Membership Meeting and the Near East and South Asia Subcommittee of the International Relations Committee. The JTA obtained it because of ALA’s open meeting policy.

Shortly after the conference, Tom put the SRRT resolution on the website of SRRT’s International Responsibilities Task Force, which he manages. This website also contained the text of the ALA resolution and clearly distinguished between the two. The SRRT resolution was identified as a SRRT resolution at the top, and additionally had a clear disclaimer at the bottom. The links to these resolutions, side by side, made it clear to anyone visiting the site that one was an ALA resolution and one was a resolution of a subgroup of ALA.

Clearly, the JTA news service, whatever else it may have misunderstood about the resolution and the process of its development, understood the difference between a SRRT and an ALA resolution, and did not mistake one for the other, as some ALA staffers and Executive Board members seem to fear.

After your telephone call, we further clarified the wording of the disclaimer, an action SRRT felt was unnecessary but which we felt nothing would be lost by doing, and moved the disclaimer to the top of the web page, as you suggested.

Following the instructions your memo, Tom did replace the page containing the text of the ALA resolution as passed with a link to the same text on the ALA site (which he managed to distinguish -430.5 somb.176invo3op top oof ty k97 Tw20(ur telephonist8.5 0 TD4467430.5 sv

been officially communicated in the past, and is nowhere to be found in the document that I take to have established the “Speaking with One Voice Policy” in the first place, Executive Board Document #1.6 (1999-2000), “Who Speaks for ALA – Issues Document.” That document’s clear statement of what it considers to be “speaking for the Association” is as follows:

Both general practice within organizations and legal opinion indicate that units or individuals may reasonably be construed to be speaking for the Association when they do either of the following:

- Indicate in a verbal or written statement that they are expressing ALA policy or an ALA position, and/or
- Use ALA (including ALA division or ALA round table) letterhead to express a policy or position.

This statement alarmed us enough when it was released, and I will state the SRRT leadership’s position on it momentarily. As far as communication of official SRRT resolutions is concerned, however, it clearly only prohibits the use of round table letterhead for the purpose. It says nothing about publication on websites or in the library press. (I should note here that wherever else we might want to publish our positions there is no place more appropriate for the communication of official SRRT resolutions than the SRRT Newsletter, and the SRRT Newsletter has been freely available on the web since 1997, and has been freely available in libraries since the founding of the Round Table.) The basis for (and official existence of) this apparent new rule that SRRT is not allowed to publish its official positions anywhere at all is extremely murky, and something which we wish to have addressed as soon as possible. (While I find it important to note that our recent instructions from ALA do not have any basis in EBD #16, this should not be taken as acceptance of the position expressed in that document.)

It is worth noting that SRRT resolutions are arrived at in our mandated open meetings, and thus cannot in principle be withheld from publication. This is as it should be. As the original drafts of many resolutions that are finally passed by ALA Council, they often provide the evidence of not only what ALA Council affirms, but what it, by a conscious process, chooses not to affirm. They are thus often a part of the public record of the path of development of Council resolutions. ALA Councilors who are happy with Council resolutions that are much changed from their original SRRT-related forms should be happy to see a public record of how a resolution’s radical elements were filtered out. SRRT members are interested in seeing the same information existing in the published record, especially concerning the SRRT-based origin of a resolution in question.

I should mention at this point in my discussion of the “Speaking with One Voice Policy” as stated in EBD #1.6 (1999-2000) that it claims to be based on principles with which the SRRT leadership entirely agrees. SRRT’s leadership completely accepts and affirms the Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual (which SRRT has helped to shape over the past three decades) as the basis of SRRT’s existence and all of its activities, and does not wish to violate any policies that truly are contained in any of these documents. Consideration of ALA policy has been central to our decision-making; accordingly, we do not believe we have violated any actual ALA policies.

We recognize that the four members of the Executive Board subcommittee who drafted this document (for informational purposes only, I should add - not for a vote) consider us to be violating ALA Policy when we send out our SRRT resolutions on SRRT letterhead. They cite eight sections of the ALA Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual as the basis for their “Information Item,” all of which the SRRT leadership agrees with. However, we do not find anything in any of these cited passages that would prohibit us from speaking clearly on our own behalf.

The subcommittee of the Executive Board lays the actual foundation for this rule in “general practice within organizations and legal opinion,” without, however, citing any evidence of actual research into general practice or legal opinion or justifying this claim in any way. We question the statement that either general practice or legal opinion could possibly result in any prohibition of a sub-group of ALA from speaking strictly on its own behalf.

SRRT representatives raised this question at a 2000 meeting of the Round Table Coordinating Committee meeting, where ALA lawyer Paula Goedert presented a report laying down the new “policy.” Our representatives asked about the legal basis that she was referring to. The answer they received, as I understand it, was that sending out a position statement on round table letterhead would violate the tax law provisions that prohibit 501(c)3 non-profit organizations from lobbying on behalf of or against political candidates. Pressed on the relevance of this law, Goedert was, I am told, unable to answer. This evidences a flimsy basis indeed for such an interpretation of ALA policy, and sorely tempts debate.

ALA does have a concern which I feel is understandable, however, and which I believe we in SRRT respect and take into consideration. That ALA is one legal and actual entity is true, and certain 8 Tcof a sub

## SRRT Booth Report by Jenna Freedman

The SRRT booth in the exhibit hall was staffed for at least 20 of 31 hours at the ALA Annual Conference in Atlanta. (I think the total was around 0 of 31 last year in San Francisco.) Booth staffers released the inner biker in up to 600 library workers by applying a “Social Responsibilities @ Your Library” temporary tattoo\* to arms, wrists, and ankles. (We were willing to stick them elsewhere, but people claimed they wanted the tattoo to be visible.) Many YA and school librarians took extras home to give out to their patrons, students, and youth advisory committees. The tattoo was distributed and used for publicity at other events, including the AIP Free Speech Buffet. It also adorned the hand of President-Elect Mitch Freedman as he welcomed people at the reception for President-Elect-Elect Carla Hayden.

Unexpected opportunity: It takes 30 seconds for the tattoo to set, which we used to harangue our captive listeners about SRRT. We handed out applications for membership along with copies of the newsletter, and literature advertising the Free Speech Buffet, SRRT proposals, and about a dozen other items.

SRRT Booth staffers included (and I may have missed a few—sorry!):

Abigail Plumb	Alison Lewis
Ann Sparanese	Aureole Johnstone
Dena Marger	Elaine Harger
Fiona Hunt	Fred Stoss
Howard Besser	Jenna Freedman
Jenny Baltes	Laura Koltutsky
Michael Santangelo	Rachel Stein
Rebecca Tolley-Stokes	Rory Litwin
Tara Dirst	

Hanging out in the booth and giving people tattoos was fun, and it gave SRRT excellent exposure—not just for the tattoos. Stay tuned for temporary piercings in Toronto...

\*Designed by my [non-library worker] friend Laura Ballinger



### MLK TASK FORCE HOLDS MULTICULTURAL IDEA EXCHANGE

Andrew A. Venerable, Director, Cleveland Public Library, was the keynote speaker for the ALA-SRRT Martin Luther King Holiday Task Force's second



continue to deteriorate and that we may need to come back with a further resolution for next meeting.

I was finally able to read our Statement of Concern on the Use of Flags in Libraries' Public Areas before the Council just at the end of the last meeting. Our supporters clapped. The SRRT resolution on Intellectual Freedom and the Use of Torture in War or Peace was also left over from the Midwinter meeting. It was originally submitted by Mark Rosenzweig to the Action Council, and I agreed when Mark asked me to withdraw it in the interests of getting our other initiatives accomplished. Our resolution on Health Insurance Benefits for ALA Members has been in the hands of the ALA Membership Committee. That Committee created a Health Insurance Benefits Task Force to gather information and report back to Council at the Midwinter meeting.

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Feminist Task Force Meeting June 15, 2002  
(In attendance: Nel Ward, Jane Cothron, Alison Lewis, Jenny  
Baltes.)

1. Web Site: Rory Litwin will host the FTF web site on libr.org.  
Jenny will contact Pamela Salela about getting the web site  
contents to him..

2. Logo:



"Libraries: Sharing Sustainability Data and Information---The Role of Libraries and Library Networks," is one of 19

## PUBLICATION REVIEWS

**Jones, Reinette F.** *Library Service to African Americans in Kentucky.* **McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers: Jefferson, NC, 2002. (ISBN 0786411546 ).**

An important volume in African-American library history, Reinette F. Jones uncovered the beginnings of library service and education for African-Americans in the United States in Kentucky, of all places. Jones wrote “Kentucky was once the leader of colored libraries, library education, and traveling libraries for Negroes” (147). Jones’ historical overview provides an informative introduction her research in primary and secondary sources that she presents in later chapters. Arranged chronologically, chapters cover the early days of education and libraries within Kentucky, Kentucky’s leadership role in public libraries and library education from 1905-1923, Kentucky’s loss of library education between 1925-1935, desegregation from 1936-1963 and finally the full impact of library services and education to African-American’s upon the state and nation from 1892-1956. Several appendices provide valuable data from which Jones drew her conclusions. While highly valuable for the information that it imparts, the narrative in each chapter is fragmented into many subheadings, thus making sections disconnected and the reading awkward. Recommended for all library history collections.

Rebecca Tolley-Stokes  
tolleyst@mail.etsu.edu

**Bulbul.** *Drawing my times cartoons by Bulbul, a thirty year retrospective.* **Arachne Publishing: Mountain View, CA, 2001. (ISBN 0940483173)**

Infused with a fine sense of irony, Genny Guracar’s cartooning career began when she took a pen name after her husband was fired from his job in steel manufacturing because of a letter she wrote to the editor of her local newspaper. Known as Bulbul, she’s had a thirty year career as a cartoonist though has not boasted mainstream success because “what women find humorous or

ironic can differ from what a male-middle aged, middle-class white editor finds funny (ii).” Aligning herself with the second wave of feminism, her cartoons embody that influence.

Published in Z Magazine, Multinational Monitor, women’s rights publications and other alternative media, Bulbul makes up a monthly cartoon packet

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occasional ruminations.

Confessions of a Dope Dealer is as much a cautionary tale as it is a drug user's manual. The moral of this tale is that drugs are a seductive yet short-lived and harmful path to self-awareness. This book is recommended reading for parents, teachers, youth workers, and anyone struggling to make informed decisions about drug use. The accessible and entertaining text includes a glossary and list of additional resources.

Robyn Erler  
Public Access Computer Trainer  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
robyn@gatesfoundation.org

**JOURNAL REVIEW: *Journal of Bisexuality***  
**2001- Ed: Fritz Klein, MD 4/yr \$48.00 (indiv.);**  
**\$85 (inst.); \$125 (libraries). Discount to members**  
**of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex.**  
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*(Continued from page 4)*

strongly, however, that communicating our positions to the public and to the membership, rather than creating confusion, enhances the membership's understanding of issues within ALA and informs the public about realities they might otherwise be unaware. Our position is simply, "The answer to speech we don't like is more and better speech."

In any event, we are, I believe, scrupulous in avoiding confusion as to whom we speak for and what a SRRT resolution is. No matter what policies are set and followed, it is impossible to completely avoid confusion among the public, and impossible to completely control the speech of (and the interpretation of the speech of) ALA members. Furthermore, such restrictions on speech would be, we believe, in fact antithetical to the spirit of librarianship as ALA has so soundly established it over the past century.

Aside from the issue of Intellectual Freedom, however, central to our concerns about the "Speaking with One Voice Policy," is

**ALA Executive Board**  
**Fall Board Meeting: 1999**

**Topic:** Who Speaks for ALA? - Issues document

**Action Requested:** Information Item - No Action Required

**Action Requested By:** Mary W. Ghikas, Senior Associate Executive Director - for  
Robert Newlen, Executive Board Member

**Date:** 1 November 1999

**Background:**

In response to various issues surrounding communication, a subcommittee of the ALA Executive Board (R. Newlen, J. Cummins, S. Reed, L. Bishoff) has reviewed policy and past practice. The attached document is presented as a basis for discussion.

The attached document will also form a basis for discussion with ALA staff with liason responsibility to round tables and committees, at an orientation for staff (including Washington Office staff) regarding liason roles on November 17, 1999.

**WHO SPEAKS FOR ALA?: Policy, Practice and Concerns**

Three bodies -

divisions, and the membership - have authority to determine and act for ALA in matters of policy. Recommendations of Round Tables regarding a lack of policy, a new policy, or changes in policy shall be forwarded to the appropriate body for action.

**ALA Policy Manual - 9.1 The Use of ALA's Name and Joint Relationships**

The American Library Association is a nonprofit organization operated in the interests of libraries and to promote library service and membership.

ALA units are responsible to Council which determines policies. Council's actions, however, may be overset by membership. Therefore, primarily and ultimately the responsibility for the use of the American Library Association name rests with the aggregate membership.

The Association is governed by Council and administered by the Executive Board, which in its role as central management board, appoints the executive director, who is in charge of headquarters and personnel.

The executive director delegates authority within ALA headquarters to ALA's department heads, how, in carrying out their assigned duties, are called upon to use ALA's name and, in that name, to commit the Association to programs, activities, and binding agreements.

Divisions are empowered by ALA's bylaws "to act for the ALA as a whole on any matter determined by Council to be the responsibility of the division." Authority for acting on behalf of the division rests with that division's executive board.

Round tables, membership initiative groups, and committees, do not have this constitutional authority.

The American Library Association's Executive Board, divisions, executive director, and department heads (consisting of the associate executive directors for the Washington Office, Communications, Finance, Member Programs and Services, Publishing and Staff Support Services) who must use ALA's name in executing their responsibilities or in entering into joint relationships with other organizations abide by stated ALA policies and the following principles: [Principles for "joint relationships," endorsements or boycotts, and commendations follow.]

While ALA policy is clear on who may commit or speak for the Association, and within what limitations, it has been less clear on what constitutes "speaking for the Association." Both general practice within organizations and legal opinion indicate that units or individuals may reasonably be construed to be speaking for the Association when they do either of the following:

- Indicate in a verbal or written statement that they are expressing ALA policy or an ALA position, and/or
- Use ALA (including ALA division or ALA round table) letterhead to express a policy or position.

The question of who commits or speaks for the Association is a critical one to the Association

(1) It is our policy that "ALA speaks with one voice for the profession." [**ALA Policy Manual - 1.4 ALA Organizational Support Goals; ALA Policy Manual - 6.4 Divisions, II. Current Organizational Values of ALA.**]

(2) ALA is incorporated as a nonprofit organization under section 501(c)3 of the U.S. Internal Revenue code. This has significant advantages for the Association; it also limits the actions of the Association in certain arenas - e.g. the Association may not support any candidate for political office. ALA is one legal entity; therefore, any action by any unit of the Association may put at risk the entire Association.

(3) Most organizations with which ALA works on matters of public policy have strict policies on who can sign and transmit formal policy positions to Congress or to high-level officials. This is done for several reasons: to ensure accuracy of transmittal of positions, to emphasize the importance and high priority given to policy transmissions, and to maximize the impact by not sending too many such communications. Further, because policymakers and legislators receive so many communications and are under such time pressure, misunderstanding a letter from a part of an organization as coming from the whole can happen easily. Finally, such communication can be deliberately represented as coming from the parent body, either by law or by custom.



Correspondence and manuscripts may  
be sent to the editor at:

**Jane Ingold, Editor**