

# The Complete Beginners' Guide to Getting Involved in Professional Associations

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# Why get involved in professional associations?



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- To learn from:
  - Conferences
  - Online events
  - Discussion lists
  - Publications
  - Mentoring programs
- To support the association's advocacy activities
- To gain experience in service and leadership

# Service and leadership opportunities



- To contribute to your profession
- To learn more about your field
- To improve your leadership skills
- To meet requirements for service (if applicable at your library)

Source: ALA Archives -- <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/8db2e3c0-2b7c-0134-1d8b-0050569601ca-f>

# Why should you pursue service opportunities?



336. THE LIBRARIAN AT TUSKEGEE AND HIS ASSISTANT

- To develop a professional network leading to opportunities in:
  - Professional advancement
  - Publication and presentation opportunities
  - Committee appointments



# Where can you find service opportunities?



Source: National Archives -- <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/12170916>

- Choose service work you believe matters
- Ask your colleagues for information
- Explore options
  - Committees
  - Round tables
  - Divisions
  - Councils
  - Districts

# Explore associations aligned with your interests.

## Geographic Area

- International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)
- American Library Association (ALA)
- Texas Library Association (TLA)
- Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA)

## Type of Library

- American Association for School Librarians (AASL)
- Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)
- Public Library Association (PLA)
- Special Libraries Association (SLA)

# Explore associations aligned with your interests.

## Identity Groups

- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table of ALA (GLBTRT)
- Black Caucus of ALA (BCALA)
- Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL)
- American Indian Library Association (AILA)
- Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA)
- Chinese-American Librarians Association (CALA)
- National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA)

# Explore associations aligned with your interests.

## Specializations

- American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST)
- Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA)
- Digital Library Federation (DLF)
- League of Awesome Librarians (LoAL) [networking; innovation]
- Medical Library Association (MLA)
- Music Library Association (MLA)
- NASIG (formerly North American Serials Interest Group)
- Society of American Archivists (SAA)





# American Library Association

## Divisions

- American Association of School Librarians (AASL)
- Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)
- Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)
- Core: Leadership, Infrastructures, Futures (Core)
- Public Library Association (PLA)
- Reference & User Services Association (RUSA)
- United for Libraries: Trustees, Friends, Foundations (United)
- Young Adults Library Services Association (YALSA)

Divisions have sections, committees, and interest groups.

# American Library Association Round Tables

“A round table is a membership unit established to promote a field of librarianship not within the scope of any single division.”

ALA has 19 round tables. For example:

- Games and Gaming Round Table (GAMERT)
- Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table (GNCRT)
- Government Documents Round Table (GODORT)
- Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT)
- Library Research Round Table (LRRT)

# New Members Round Tables (NMRT)



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- ALA NMRT
  - Conference programs, webinars
  - Mentoring program
  - Resume review service
  - Journal, blog
  - Service opportunities
- TLA NMRT
  - Conference programs
  - Newsletter
  - Service opportunities



# Finding an Association -- Cataloging Example

- ALA – Core: Infrastructures, Leaders, Futures – Metadata and Collections
- ALA – ACRL – Rare Books and Manuscripts Section – Bibliographic Standards Committee
- ALA – GODORT – Cataloging Committee
- ALA – MAGIRT – Cataloging and Classification Committee
- ALA – GNCRT – Metadata and Cataloging Committee
- MLA – Cataloging and Metadata Committee
- OLAC – Online Audiovisual Catalogers
- TLA – Cataloging & Metadata Round Table

# Where can you find service opportunities?



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- Calls for participation
- Association websites
- Association discussion lists
- Volunteer application forms
- Working group meetings
- Informal arrangements

# Volunteer Application Form

- Name
- Institution
- Contact information
- Committee(s) preferred and priority order
- Virtual membership option
- Previous committee service
- Current professional association commitments
- Willing to serve as chair or social media lead
- Special skills relevant to committee work



# Be clear about what's involved in a service role



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- Responsibilities
- Committee charge
- Length of term
- Time required
- Number of meetings
- Virtual or in-person meetings

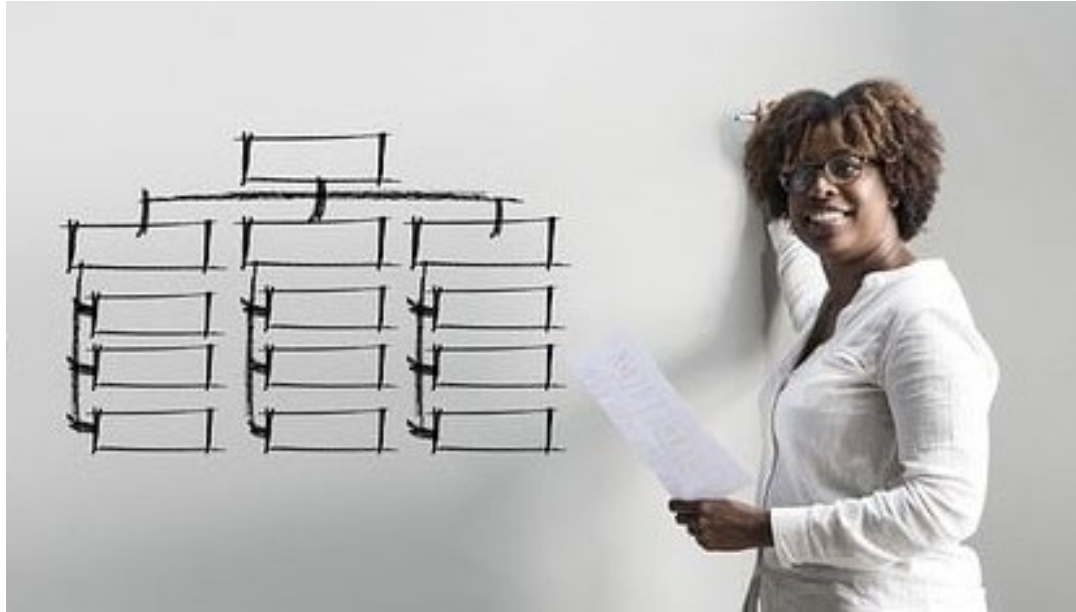
# Being selective about service opportunities



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- You may have to be less selective in accepting service roles at the beginning of your career if you plan to establish a record of service.
- Be careful not to overcommit yourself.

# How can you become an officer of an association?



<https://pixabay.com/photos/businesswoman-organization-chart-3629643/>

- Call for volunteers
- Nominating committee
- Informal arrangements



# How can you be a good committee member?



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- Do more than the minimum.
- Attend every meeting.
- Participate in meetings but do not dominate them.
- Participate in online discussions.
- Reply to emails.
- Volunteer for assignments.
- Complete assignments on time.

# How can you find time for service?



<https://pixabay.com/photos/home-office-coffee-computer-laptop-5000280/>

- Ask about time requirements in advance and do not volunteer if you cannot fulfill the obligations.
- Keep your work calendar up to date.
- Block off time in your calendar.
- Keep a list of tasks to complete.

# Document your service



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- Update your CV regularly.
- Retain letters from committee chairs.
- Keep notes about your work.
  - Your contributions
  - Impact
  - Reach



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# Questions?



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