

APALA Engagement Task Force Report

Executive Summary

APALA Executive Board formed a task force to review engagement efforts and opportunities with library workers from Native Hawaiian (NH)/Pacific Islander (PI) communities as well as those from South Asian (SA), Southeast (SEA), Southwest (SWA) and Central Asian (CA) backgrounds and identities. The task force collected data from two sources using online surveys (N=74) sent to APALA membership via listserv and virtual interviews (N=15) of survey completers. After analyzing the qualitative data collected, the task force members performed content analysis and identified themes and patterns.

Overall, the findings generated themes about 1) Member vs. Community needs, 2) Issues and Challenges, 3) Connections and Support, and Relationship/Community Building.

- “Member vs. Community Needs” as a theme identified differences in needs between Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians in Hawaii compared to those living in the continental US. Other sub themes included early career support and leadership roles, specifically creating a path to APALA leadership.
- “Issues and Challenges” has six subthemes, including “American” in the organization’s name and meeting the needs of a diverse membership. Nurturing potential leaders and succession planning strategies was identified as another subtheme. Several sub themes revolved around programming opportunities and increased engagement and representation in planning and delivery.
- “Connections and Support” encompasses opportunities for engagement from chapter activities to partnership with other organizations. Other sub themes include mentoring, networking, and representation. Further, the task force identified funding support and increased professional development opportunities.
- Finally, “Relationship/Community Building” describes areas where engagement with other organizations and communities requires increased efforts.

The task force committee recommends reviewing the APALA programming charge and structure for inclusivity and representation given the target communities. Other recommendations involved increased funding support to leadership and professional development activities and partnerships with international library organizations.

In conclusion, the task force acknowledges that APALA has limited capacity, expertise, and resources to address all member issues and concerns. It cannot satisfy everyone’s complex needs. However, APALA can provide spaces to support the work of its many members through programming, leadership, and professional development.

Background

In 2022 APALA received feedback from the annual membership survey stating a need to develop a task force to review APALA's engagement efforts and opportunities with library workers from Native Hawaiian (NH)/Pacific Islander (PI) communities as well as those from South Asian (SA), Southeast (SEA), Southwest (SWA) and Central Asian (CA) backgrounds and identities. Ray Pun posted a call on the APALA listserv in April 2022. The task force first met in May 2022, where we did introductions and discussed the initial charge to implement plans.

The report describes our process for reviewing and assessing APALA's former and current programming and activities within the last ten years. The report also details our findings by analyzing survey responses, interview recordings, and transcripts. Survey completers signed up for interviews. We selected fifteen of the seventeen who agreed to participate.

Summary of Activities

- A. **Task Force Formation.** After soliciting volunteers through the APALA listserv, the Executive Board named Danilo Baylin and Jenay Dougherty co-chairs. Four APALA members: Alysa Cua, Chella Vaidyanathan, Jess Koshi-Lum, and Lori Misaka, joined them as part of the task force. With guidance from Ray Pun, the task force held several virtual meetings to discuss collecting and analyzing data afterward in response to the charge. The task force decided to conduct an environmental scan of available materials and then create a survey for further data collection.
- B. **Environmental Scan.** First, we conducted an environmental scan of APALA's history and background of programming, including committee work, engagement initiatives, such as the "What's Your Normal?" essay blog, past conference programs, such as the APALA President's program at the Annual and the annual Literary Awards past book lists. To do this, we systematically reviewed the public-facing website and APALA Wiki site, the meeting minutes, past EB officer lists, documents & reports.
- C. **Survey** (See appendix 1)
 - a. Our next activity was an electronic survey done through Google Forms. The TF sent the survey to the APALA member listserv in November 2022 and requested completion in January 2023. We received a total of 74 responses from both members and non-members alike.
 - b. [Appendix 2](#) displays visual graphs of the demographics of survey respondents.

D. Interviews

Our final activity was to interview select participants who opted in to be interviewed via the survey. Interviews were conducted in April via Zoom and recorded and uploaded in a Google

folder shared strictly with the task force. The participants' identities were kept anonymous and they were informed the recordings would be deleted after the task force's duties had ended.

The interview questions (see appendix 3) were based on the survey and open-ended which allowed the participants time and space to answer honestly and candidly about their experiences with APALA.

Demographics

a. Ethnicities

- 7 of 15 - self-identified as Southeast Asian in the survey (but one living in Hawaii)
- 3 of 15 - self-identified as South Asian in the survey
- 5 of 15 - self-identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander in the survey

b. Roles

- Four early career librarians
- Three public librarians
- Two academic librarians
- Two library staff
- One school librarian
- Three with past APALA leadership roles

Findings and Discussion

A. Member vs. Community Needs

- 1. Native Hawaiians (NH) and Pacific Islanders (PI)** – The difference between the two groups was not apparent after analyzing the survey responses. However, after reviewing the interview recordings and notes, the Task Force (TF) members discerned differences in the identified needs of the NH from PI participants. The NH participants expressed needs and concerns about preserving Hawaiian culture vis-a-vis library services and practices. TF members noted these diverging concerns and identified them as exclusive to the participants with NH and PI backgrounds.
- 2. NH in Hawaii vs. NH in Continental US** — Further, the interviewers identified two groups falling under the category of NH participants. One group identified themselves as living in Hawaii, while the other resides in the continental US. During the interviews, the two groups expressed, described, and discussed different needs and concerns, which helped us understand the challenge of lumping the two groups into one.
- 3. Early Career Support** — The survey responses did not provide significant expression of needs that one could attribute to the range of experiences of the completers. At least a third of those interviewed identified themselves as LIS students or recent graduates of LIS programs—most expressed a need for assistance in gaining more knowledge and skills in performing librarian or library worker roles.

- 4. Leadership Roles** — Several interviewees identified issues related to APALA leadership which did not significantly surface from the survey responses. First, some participants expressed the need to better represent the different populations under the APALA umbrella: East, South, Southeast, Southwest, Central, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander. Second, TF members suggested providing opportunities for leadership development, such as having a structured program like a Leadership Academy to nurture would-be leaders or interested individuals and provide a path for succession.

B. Issues & Challenges

- 1. The “American” Label:** Many Native Hawaiians stated that “American” in APALA is problematic due to the history of colonization in Hawaii. The issue needs further discussion at the Executive Board level.
- 2. “We are not one thing, but we are a multiple of things”** — A couple of interviewees commented that it is harder to embrace the Asian Pacific Islander label as unified because each is so different given the individual group’s fabric made of cultural norms and traditions, social structures, political and historical backgrounds. There seems to be a consensus among participants that labeling APALA members as one united group without recognizing the differences and uniqueness of each group could be challenging.
- 3. Future APALA Leadership: Nurturing and Succession Planning** — Several interviewees mentioned nurturing potential members for future leadership roles. APALA may need to study the creation of an infrastructure and process that supports leadership development for those interested in future opportunities.
- 4. Metrics of Engagement:** After reviewing the survey responses and listening to the interview recordings, the task force members discussed the value of understanding what APALA meant by engaged membership vis-a-vis its daily activities. Given a consensus on the definition of engagement indicators, APALA could charge its committees and task forces to encourage active engagement throughout the year.
- 5. Expanding Programming Opportunities:** Professional (Library Roles), cultural (Heritage), educational (Skills Development), social (Networking), social justice (Advocacy), and community-building programs need consideration for design, development, and implementation across the seven targeted communities: NH, PI, SA, SEA, SWA, CA, and EA.

Further, the library profession is vast and complex. Many participants also expressed the need for more programming that addresses issues, concerns, and challenges of APALA members as librarians and library workers.

Creating programs responsive to the diverse needs of APALA members requires representation, creativity, and authentic leadership. For example, one of the participants mentioned that it would be good to provide programs about historical and current events impacting a specific APALA member community. Interviewees also said the need for social events to facilitate community development and for APALA members, such as education on issues related to history and language.

6. **APALA Group Representation in Program Planning:** In designing programs for APALA and affiliated communities, the TF members believed in involving individuals representing each group to lead the planning process. The categories below could assist in guiding the programming efforts for APALA members across groups:
 - a. Professional (i.e., professional & career development, mentorship)
 - b. Educational (continuing education)
 - c. Social (networking, virtual/local meet-up)
 - d. Cultural (cultural knowledge, education)
 - e. Social Justice & Advocacy
 - f. Community Building (local/regional engagement, community programming)

C. Connections & Support

1. **Engaging APALA Chapters:** Interviewees expressed appreciation for the opportunity to organize a chapter. They see the benefit of socialization with other members co-located with each other by region.
2. **Programming with other NALCOs:** Several NH and PI participants expressed that they find more connection with and relevance of programming through the American Indian Library Association (AILA).
3. **Mentoring opportunities:** Several survey participants and interviewees provided positive feedback about mentoring experiences. However, some noted that the matching process needs improvement. Others still needed to have the opportunity to participate as a mentor or a protegee.
4. **Networking:** There is a need for more informal networking events among different communities (conference meet-ups, virtual social events, spaces for informal connection) as APALA membership grows.
5. **Professional Development:** APALA-sponsored webinars for professional development (i.e., subject areas, library roles, and skills) need more planning and marketing. APALA needs to communicate what events are directly designed and developed by its committees compared to those resulting from collaboration or indirect support. APALA's level of direct involvement with professional development events must become transparent to its members.
6. **Funding:** Most participants expressed the need for more scholarships to support APALA members in defraying expenses in seeking library credentials or education. Also, the participants identified the need for professional development grants supporting attendance and participation at ALA or relevant conferences.
7. **Representation of APALA groups:** Some participants commented on the recent publication of the APALA booklists demonstrating efforts to represent the works of authors, illustrators, and translators from the target communities: NH, PI, SA, SEA, SWA, and CA.

D. Relationship/Community Building

1. Participants expressed the need to increase efforts to collaborate and connect with other professional library associations (e.g., PIALA, HLA, MELA, CONSALD, and SAADA)
2. Participants commented on APALA using task forces and partnering with NALCOs to explore challenges, issues, and concerns.
3. Create awareness among APALA members on building identities within and across groups (mixed backgrounds)
4. Continue to conduct outreach activities to connect with various communities (e.g., location, interest, subject areas, roles).

Recommendations

We recommend the APALA Executive Board endorse and act on the following Engagement Task Force recommendations.

1. The TF members recognize that not all APALA members will participate in every program hosted or sponsored by the committees or task force. However, with these recommendations, APALA can help address programming issues by:
 - a. Creating a rotating schedule throughout the year that addresses at least one of the identified issues, concerns, or challenges would help address the needs of one or more APALA communities.
 - b. Inviting all communities to participate in creating inclusive programming sponsored by APALA.
 - c. Reevaluating the structure and membership of the Programming Committee to ensure representation by all communities.
 - d. Using explicit and appropriate terminology when organizing and promoting programs and events (i.e., Pasifika, Muslim, Chinese Americans, etc.).
 - e. Recommending diversifying the program using clear categories, such as professional, educational, cultural, social, social justice (advocacy), and community-building. We suggest that APALA design and implement at least one event for each category annually.
 - f. Hosting conversations around issues important to an APALA community, such as settler colonialism, displacement, land back movement, and Indigenous Hawaiian sovereignty.
 - g. Continue promoting community-building programs focusing on local underrepresented communities (i.e., NH, PI, SA, SEA, SWA, and CA).

2. Include resources and media from underrepresented communities, including narratives from authors, illustrators, storytellers, creators, and experts in APALA-sponsored publications and presentations.
3. Be specific when addressing which communities are represented instead of using blanket terminology like API.
4. APALA should consider building connections with international library organizations (Pacific Island Association of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (PIALA), Philippine Librarians Associations, Inc. (PLAI), and Middle Eastern Librarians Association (MELA) with similar goals to support their members.
5. Recruit and nurture potential leaders among APALA members, especially from underrepresented communities.
6. Increase funding support for APALA members from underrepresented communities to participate in professional development opportunities (travel, accommodations, and registration).

Conclusion

The charge for the Engagement Task Force initially seemed simple enough to review APALA's engagement efforts and opportunities with library workers from specific groups under its umbrella. After collecting data from various sources (artifacts, surveys, and interviews), the task force understood that APALA members' needs are a multi-layered and complex fabric (i.e., socio-cultural, economic, and political). Furthermore, contemporary issues related to perceptions of race, the model minority, and the pandemic brought about social justice concerns for API communities. The task force acknowledges that APALA has limited capacity, expertise, and resources to address all member issues and concerns. It cannot satisfy everyone's complex needs. However, APALA can provide spaces to support the work of its many members through programming, leadership, and professional development. The Engagement Task Force outlines and submits this report of recommendations for the Executive Board's action.

Engagement Task Force

Co-Chairs: Danilo M. Baylen and Jenay Dougherty

Members: Alysa Cua, Chella Vaidyanathan, Lori Misaka, Jess Koshi-Lum

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

APALA Engagement with Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, South, Southeast, Southwest and Central Asian American library workers: A Survey

Thank you for your interest in taking this survey. The purpose of this survey is to identify engagement opportunities with Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, South, Southeast, Southwest, and Central Asian American library workers within APALA and in the field. We are interested in hearing how APALA as a library association can engage with library workers within these communities. Both members and non-members are welcome to participate in this survey, as we would like to consider all ideas and opportunities to support such diverse groups of library workers in APALA. The survey is a part of the APALA Engagement Task Force's charge and will inform a recommendation report to be shared with the APALA Executive Board for consideration to adapt in July 2023.

Your responses will remain anonymous. If you choose to participate in an interview with the Engagement Task Force, you may do so by continuing to a separate section. This survey will take approximately 5-15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation in helping inform how APALA can engage with all API communities.

* Indicates required question

1. Do you identify as any of the following (select all that apply) *

Mark only one oval.

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (Melanesians including the Fijians (Fiji), Kanaks (New Caledonia), Ni-Vanuatu (Vanuatu), Papua New Guineans (Papua New Guinea), Solomon Islanders (Solomon Islands), and West Papuans (Indonesia's West Papua). Micronesians including Carolinians (Northern Mariana Islands), Chamorros (Guam), Chuukese (Chuuk), I-Kiribati (Kiribati), Kosraeans (Kosrae), Marshallese (Marshall Islands), Palauans (Palau), Pohnpeians (Pohnpei), and Yapese (Yap). Polynesians including the New Zealand Māori (New Zealand), Native Hawaiians (Hawaii), Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Samoans (Samoa and American Samoa), Tahitians (Tahiti), Tokelauans (Tokelau), Niueans (Niue), Cook Islands Māori (Cook Islands) and Tongans (Tonga)).

Skip to question 6

South Asian (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.)

Skip to question 6

Southeast Asian (Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)

Skip to question 6

Southwest Asian (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Israel, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.)

Skip to question 6

Central Asian (Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan)

Skip to question 6

Two or more of above identities

Skip to question 2

None of the above

Skip to question 3

Two or more identities.

2. If you selected two or more of the identities listed, please tell us those identities. *

Skip to question 6

None of the above

3. Are you an APALA member? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

4. (OPTIONAL) If you do not identify as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, South, Southeast, Southwest or Central Asian, you are welcome to share with us your identity here.

5. If you identified as none of the above, what are your thoughts on APALA engaging *
with Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and/or South, Southeastern, Southwestern,
and Central Asian American library workers?

Membership Question

6. Are you an APALA member? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No *Skip to question 9*

APALA Member

7. How long have you been a member? *

8. Tell us briefly about your work/service with APALA *

Skip to question 10

Non APALA member

9. How did you learn about this survey? *

Demographics Question

Just a little bit about your background

10. How long have you been in the profession? *

Mark only one oval.

0-5 years

6-15 years

16+ years

11. Type of Affiliation/Institution *

Mark only one oval.

- Academic Libraries - universities, colleges, archives
- LIS Educator
- LIS Student
- Public Libraries
- School Libraries
- Special Libraries including museums, legal, corporate, medical, historical, nonprofit, consortium
- Not in libraries/retired

Engagement Questions

In this part, we'd like to hear from YOU as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and/or South, Southeastern, Southwestern, and Central Asian American library workers about library association work and engagement.

12. If you identify as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and/or South, Southeastern, Southwestern, and Central Asian, what are your thoughts regarding APALA engaging with such groups of library workers recently and over the past 40 years? *

13. As an APALA member or non-member, what would you like to see more of APALA *
as a library association doing?

14. What opportunities can APALA consider in engaging with Native Hawaiian, Pacific *
Islander and/or South, Southeastern, Southwestern, and Central Asian library
workers?

15. We are planning to conduct interviews with individuals who identify as such, *
would you be interested in speaking with us about your experiences?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes *Skip to question 16*
 No

Skip to question 16

Interview

You are invited to share your experience with us in a private virtual meeting, via Zoom with one of the Engagement Task Force members.

16. If you would like to participate, please include your contact information - name and email address. We will be in touch! *

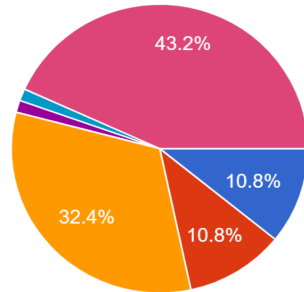
This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Appendix 2: Survey Demographics

Do you identify as any of the following (select all that apply)

74 responses



- Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (Melanesians including the Fijians (Fiji...))
- South Asian (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri La...)
- Southeast Asian (Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia...)
- Southwest Asian (Saudi Arabia, Yeme...)
- Central Asian (Afghanistan, Kazakhst...)
- Two or more of above identities
- None of the above

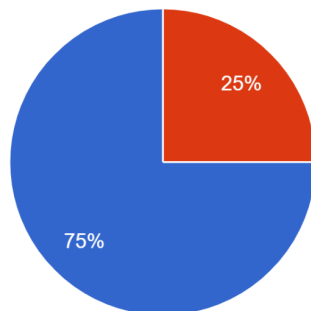
Central Asian - 1.4%

Two or More - 1.4%

None of the Above Membership breakdown

Are you an APALA member?

32 responses

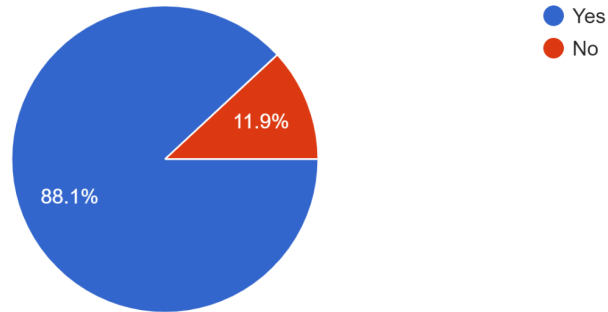


- Yes
- No

Membership breakdown of targeted identities

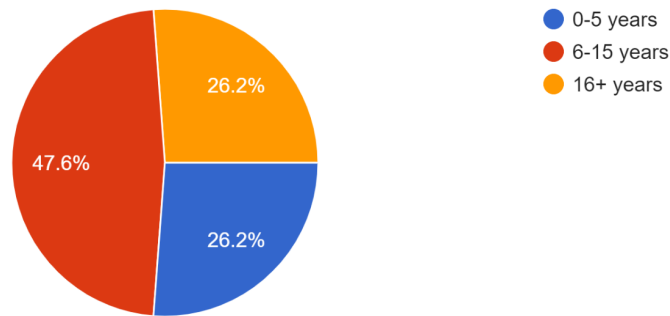
Are you an APALA member?

42 responses



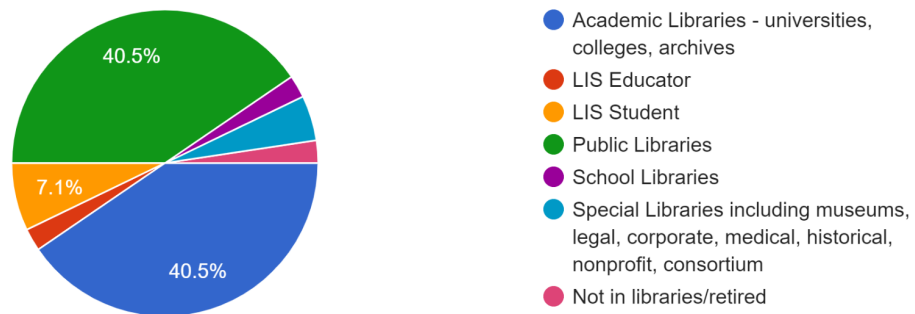
How long have you been in the profession?

42 responses



Type of Affiliation/Institution

42 responses



School Libraries - 2.4% (1 response)
Special Libraries - 4.8% 2 responses)
Retired/Not in libraries - 4.8%
LIS educator - 2.4%

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

1. **Describe your level of engagement or participation with APALA.**
 - a. What was the event, program, or circumstances in which you engaged?
 - b. How would you describe your experience with APALA? Positive, negative, or neutral?
 - c. If negative, what could APALA have done to make your experience better or more positive?
2. **What made you decide to engage with or join APALA?**
 - a. If you have not engaged with APALA, can you describe your reasoning?
3. **In your experience, how do you feel APALA has engaged with and included library workers and community users within the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, South, Southeast, Southwestern, and Central Asian communities?**
4. **What more would you like to see APALA do in the future for these communities?**
5. **Where do you go to learn about APALA events, programs, and news?**