

Proposal to the DPLA Steering Committee

Issue: Open Meetings Guidelines for the DPLA Planning Initiative

Short Description: The Digital Public Library of America planning initiative (DPLA) strives to conduct its activities as openly and transparently as possible in order to facilitate maximum public awareness of and engagement with its work. To develop an appropriate set of open meetings guidelines for the DPLA planning initiative, the Governance Workstream has examined common approaches, components, and considerations for open meetings, including the central components of open meetings policies that apply to governmental organizations in Massachusetts, California, and New York, professional membership organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA), local library boards, and quasi-public/private governance organizations such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

Recommendation: Based on a review of existing open meetings policies across a variety of contexts and on the ad hoc processes and procedures that have developed thus far in the functioning of the workstreams and plenary meetings, the workstream recommends the attached open meetings guidelines be implemented for the remainder of the DPLA planning initiative.

Submitted by: Governance Workstream

Related documents: DPLA Open Meetings Guidelines—Draft Proposal

DPLA Open Meetings Guidelines

Draft Proposal

The Digital Public Library of America planning initiative (DPLA) strives to conduct its activities as openly and transparently as possible in order to facilitate maximum public awareness of and engagement with its work.

The DPLA is currently a project hosted at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, and as such is not a “public body” subject to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s Open Meeting Law (M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25).¹ However, in keeping with its goals of openness and transparency, the DPLA has developed the following open meetings guidelines.

These guidelines are intended to apply to meetings held under the umbrella of the DPLA planning initiative between now and April 2013. This initiative is a complex one, constituting multiple workstream partners and involving a wide variety of players, and as such individual meetings may deviate from these guidelines slightly where need arises. Throughout this effort, the organizers of each meeting will make a best effort to meet or exceed the guidelines below.

Meetings

The DPLA includes a wide spectrum of meetings, ranging from day-long public events to organizational staff meetings. These open meetings guidelines are intended to apply to three types of meetings:

1. DPLA public plenary meetings, hosted and organized by the DPLA Secretariat and held every six months;
2. DPLA workshops, hosted and organized by individual workstreams and generally held in the periods between plenary meetings; and
3. DPLA Steering Committee meetings, held in person at the public plenary meetings and between plenary meetings by phone.

Public Notice of Meetings

The DPLA recognizes the importance of advance notice and broad outreach around its open meetings. The DPLA strives to announce DPLA plenary meetings via the appropriate DPLA listservs and on the DPLA website (<http://dp.la/get-involved/events/>) at least one month in advance and to announce DPLA workshops and Steering Committee calls via the same channels at least two weeks in advance.

The complexity of the DPLA planning initiative is such that announcements may occasionally deviate from these guidelines, for example in the case of more rapidly

¹ Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25 (Effective July 1, 2010), <http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/>.

scheduled Steering Committee calls. In these cases, the DPLA will announce meetings as early as possible.

Registration and Attendance

DPLA plenary meetings, workshops, and in-person Steering Committee meetings are open to the public. Due to space and budgetary constraints, registration for these meetings is required; registration processes will be announced concurrently with the public notice of each meeting. Community members who are not able to attend in person due to capacity constraints are encouraged to participate remotely.

Remote Participation

The DPLA endeavors to provide remote participation opportunities for interested parties in each of its open meetings. Depending on available equipment, bandwidth, and individual meeting budgets, these opportunities may include audio recording, video recording, a conference call line, and/or audio or video streaming.

Remote participation opportunities will be announced no later than one week before each meeting; any changes to these opportunities due to technical constraints will be promptly communicated via the appropriate DPLA listservs and website.

Remote Participation in Steering Committee Calls

The DPLA encourages interested community members to join Steering Committee calls. In order to ensure productive discussion, the Secretariat strives to post draft Steering Committee call agendas two weeks before each call. Community members are requested to RSVP to the calls, providing comments or requests for discussion on specific issues, at least one week in advance. A portion of each call will be dedicated to the discussion of those issues raised by the community; a full audio recording of the call and minutes will be posted after each call (see “Minutes” below).

Executive Sessions

The DPLA Steering Committee reserves the right to go into executive session to deliberate and consider such matters as personnel, litigation, and compliance with law or federal grant-in-aid requirements.

Attendance at executive sessions is limited to Steering Committee members and such other persons as shall be invited to attend the session.

Before entering an executive session, the Steering Committee chair will state the reason for the executive session to the extent possible without compromising the purpose for the executive session. While in executive session, the Steering Committee may only discuss matters for which the executive session was called. No final action will be taken in these sessions.²

² *David Curry recommended amending this to allow final action to be taken in Executive Sessions with respect to personnel and other such sensitive matters.*

Agenda and Materials

The DPLA strives to make draft agendas and reading materials, where they exist, available two weeks in advance of each meeting. Materials will be posted on the DPLA website and circulated via the appropriate DPLA listservs. Final agendas will be circulated one day before each event, recognizing that in some cases last-minute additions may arise.

The DPLA welcomes public comment on draft meeting agendas and endeavors, to the extent possible given time and budget constraints, to incorporate comments and suggestions into the final agenda for each meeting.

Minutes

The DPLA strives to make all meeting minutes, as well as any audio/video recordings, available via the DPLA website and appropriate listservs within two weeks after each meeting.

Public Comment on DPLA Proposals

The DPLA Steering Committee was established in October 2010 to guide efforts toward the creation of a DPLA. The Steering Committee seeks broad consensus to the extent possible while striving to ensure consistent progress toward the creation of a full-scale Digital Public Library of America in 2013.

During the planning initiative, individual workstreams will use discussions on their listservs and in their workshops to develop proposals for how various aspects of the DPLA should operate. Drafts of these proposals will be posted on the DPLA website (<http://dp.la>) and appropriate DPLA listservs for public comment. Comments will be collected via the listservs and wiki for a period of two weeks. Following this comment period, the DPLA Secretariat and workstream coordinators will synthesize these comments and present them along with the draft proposal to the Steering Committee for discussion.