

# ACBL MANAGEMENT REPORT

*Fall 2018 – Honolulu, HI*

## *Club & Membership Services*

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### **Membership**

As of the end of October, ACBL Membership stands at 165,369. This reflects a decrease of about 1% since January 1 (166,793). New members increased by 1.3% over last year. More information is available in the [Active Membership Statistics – October 2018](#) report.

#### **TEMPORARY MEMBERSHIP**

ACBL recruited 1598 Temporary Members between March 1<sup>st</sup> and November 14<sup>th</sup>. Of those:

- 19% upgraded to a 1-year membership
- 4% upgraded to a 3-year membership
- 21% are still active temporary members
- 56% are now inactive

Data shows that the Temporary Membership program has been unsuccessful in growing our membership:

- New member enrollment didn't increase between March and October, when compared to the same period last year
- About 67% of our temporary members joined to get an ACBL member number and be able to play in an ACBL tournament (a member number are now a requirement, even if inactive)

#### **NEW MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS FOR 2019**

Growing membership is a top priority, so management is currently developing several new recruitment and retention programs:

**Auto-renewal** – Most membership associations and media subscriptions available on the market offer an auto-renewal option, where no action by the member is required for renewing. Auto-renewal will save time and give peace of mind to the majority of our members who renew. We will notify all members by email or paper letter before we charge their credit card. Members who want to opt-out of auto-renewal will be able to do it easily through MyACBL.

**Improved Recruitment Incentives** – The majority of club officials and teachers are not actively recruiting ACBL members: typically they only enroll new members as a result of regular club and teaching activities. In order to promote recruitment, we need to offer better incentives. Management is currently developing a new plan that includes: 1. More attractive compensation; 2. Paying rewards out frequently; 3. Pays a bonus tail when member renews in the first few years.

***New Introductory Membership*** – The Temporary Membership—which offers full member benefits for a limited time—has not been as effective as initially planned. Novice bridge players and students hesitate to commit as they do not see value in all the benefits we offer for such a short time. Management is evaluating an alternative in a free introductory membership that provides limited benefits for a longer period. Unlike the Temporary Membership, the new introductory membership teases member benefits with a few aspects newcomers will find useful, such as educational resources, access to tournaments and belonging to a bridge community. This new option gives ACBL a way to regularly reach out to uncommitted players. With a solid connection to more players, we can considerably increase the conversion to a paid membership with full benefits.

Planning and details for each program are still in review, as their implementation will require IT systems work, as well as training and promotion.

## ***Clubs***

Face-to-face club table count is down 2.26% as compared to this time last year. Total table count from January to September is 2,320,185 of which 768,211 are from online games. Check the [Club Table Report – September 2018](#) for additional details.

## ***ACBL-wide Events***

With three new games (two Junior Fund games and the Summer IMG), an improved schedule and increased promotional efforts, total table count in ACBL-wide events at clubs has more than doubled between January and September, when compared to the same period in 2017.

The **Worldwide Bridge Contest** was held on June 1 and 2 (Friday and Saturday). In previous years, these events were restricted to Friday evening and Saturday afternoon sessions. In 2018, clubs were allowed to start the games at the most convenient time, which resulted in about 60% more participants. Friday's table count more than tripled to 1231 tables, while on Saturday we had about 10% fewer tables than last year, for a final count of 915.

This was our first year offering clubs the **Summer IMG** (Instant Matchpoint Game), held on Monday, July 9. The game was well received, with 293 clubs registering and reporting the game. All the materials were sent to clubs by email which included expert commentary through video hand analysis. The final count was over 3000 tables, making this the most popular ACBL-wide event yet in 2018.

ACBL's traditional **Instant Matchpoint Game**—with Larry Cohen's commentary booklet—was held on Oct. 31. The results and table counts are not finalized at the time this report was prepared.

## ***Club Game Sanction Renewals***

An email was sent to all clubs last month asking them to renew their 2019 club game sanctions and to register for the ACBL-wide events being held next year. Over 1300 clubs have completed their sanction renewal online.

## *Finance*

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### ***Year-to-Date Financial Statements***

Revenues are tracking close to budget and expenses are \$283K under budget, resulting in a \$239K better than budget operating increase in net assets of \$127K. Year-to-date, \$461K of the \$511K capital budget has been spent. Statements can be found at:

[ACBL YTD Financials – Honolulu 2018](#)

### ***Hawaii Loss***

The fall NABC initially budgeted to lose \$167K is now estimated to lose \$630K. This is due to lower attendance and attrition damages from failing to meet the contracted hotel room block.

### ***Impaired Asset Write-off***

A \$318K impaired asset will be written-off in 2018. The write-off amount represents the capitalized costs directly related to the attempt to implement Microsoft CRM software.

### ***2019 Operating and Capital Budget***

Drafts of the 2018 forecast and the proposed 2019 budgets for operations and capital expenditures were discussed with the Finance Committee on November 5<sup>th</sup>. These documents will be updated and presented to the Finance Committee and full board in Honolulu.

## *Human Resources*

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### ***Staffing***

- Headcount 216
- Headquarters: 56 full time
- Field: 40 full time; 120 part time

### ***New Hires***

**Susie Cordell**, Director of IT: With over 25 years of experience in IT and most recently serving as a project management consultant, Susie joins the ACBL as Director of IT. During her career, Susie has implemented solutions to manage complex programs, projects and processes. Susie has worked in almost every aspect of IT, including help desk, development, project management, change management, leading organizations tactically and strategically.

**Lisa Kinnard**, Human Resources Generalist: Lisa brings over 20 years of experience in recruitment, employment policies, benefits, leave administration, HRIS and employee engagement.

**Matt Delaney**, Sr. Software Developer: Matt joins the ACBL IT team on November 19, 2018, after serving as a temporary employee for the past six months. Matt has 18 years of development experience in several programming languages, including Python and JavaScript.

## ***Open Positions***

Area Manager (CA, OR, WA)

## ***2019 Employee Benefits***

We are conducting open enrollment for 2019 benefits and will continue to offer Medical, Dental, Vision, Life, ADD and Short-Term and Long-Term Disability coverage for eligible employees with no plan changes. After two years of reduced or flat medical insurance premiums, 2019 costs are increasing 17%. Dental and Vision premiums remain flat.

## ***Facilities: Building Efficiency***

Our building upgrades and efficiencies continue to bring financial savings.

We have received a \$10,132.85 incentive from Entergy Solutions and continue to see significant year-over-year reduction in our energy costs. Ex: October 2018 Entergy bill was 55% less than October 2017.

## ***Information Technology***

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### ***Infrastructure***

- Moved the accounting application (Microsoft Great Plains) from BroadPoint's cloud to in-house cloud environment. This will initiate savings in less than two years. Analyzing application to better utilize features and functionality.
- Implemented new job server to better enable processes and migrate processing off of AS/400, which will need to be eliminated.
- Implemented a new tracking tool to better enable project mgmt. and scheduling of resources.
- Moved security feature to the cloud that enabled staff and board directors to quickly log on without the requirement to change the password every 90 days.

### ***Cost Savings Initiatives***

Found opportunities to reduce usage of Amazon cloud, resulting in cost savings of about 50%, or \$10k+, over the next two years. We will continue the analysis on infrastructure costs.

### ***Development***

#### **AS/400 MIGRATION**

Created a roadmap for moving data and applications from the AS/400. This includes the applications and data that support members, as well as clubs and tournaments. Most of the

current AS/400 applications will become web applications. In addition, we plan to implement tools for reporting and analytics in advance of AS/400 Decommission. Expect to finish the Club applications by end of Q2, 2019; redo the Charity System in Q1, 2019 and upgrade STaCs and Partnership Desk in Q2, 2019.

Unit and District data (lists, officer elections) has been moved to the cloud from AS/400. Email notifications for Special Events have also been moved to the cloud, and we have begun the migration of the monthly club reporting process off the AS/400.

#### **WEB APPS – MOVING FROM THE AS/400**

- Implemented single-sign-on for all members into all member websites. Find-a-Club map and directory, Find-a-Teacher map search and Find-a-Tournament map search have been migrated off the AS/400. Find-a-Teacher map search was removed due to privacy concerns. Completed migrating all the special events off AS/400. Updates have been completed to Join/Renew in readiness for the marketing gift memberships.
- Unit and District Officers / Unit and District Game Sanctions are completed – however, these have not been moved to production/launched; waiting on business partners; expect to launch mid-November.
- Charity Game Sanctions – completed, but not yet launched as we wait on business partners.

#### **LIVE4CLUBS**

Live4Clubs has progressed well. We are working on replacing all functionality from ACBL Club Results, focusing primarily on player and club user experience. We have released the code to production, but not yet to the clubs, as we are waiting for the communications to the clubs and employees. Brian Weikle is working on a detailed timeline and formalizing the communication plans to deliver to the clubs.

#### **MASTERPOINT ENGINE**

The Masterpoint Engine work has begun to enable the replacement of ACBLscore as masterpointing tool for club games. Additionally, work has completed to enable performing the following functions: 1) Correctly scoring pair games; 2) Correctly awarding masterpoints for pair games that use the following ratings:

- ACBL-wide (session only)
- Charity Club Championship
- Club Championship
- Grass Roots Fund
- ICC (session only)
- Junior Fund
- Unit Championships
- Education Foundation

Flighted events are supported as well.

The next set of goals are to support team games and complete masterpoint awards for ICC and ACBL-wide games' overalls.

## **NABC**

The normal work expected for readying for a NABC, which includes readying the laptops and printers, as well as the development work needed to do the seeding, and improvements to the NABC winners pages have been completed. This work needed to be done a month in advance of normal scheduling due to the location of tournament and need to ship earlier.

## **Analysis & Research**

Began research on membership auto-renewal process and on reporting and analytics.

## ***Bridge & Field Operations***

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### **Tournament Metrics**

Average Regional table count per tournament was down 10% (1187.9 v.1072.6). Three more Regionals have been held to date as compared to last year. Total table count is down 7%.

Average Sectional table count is down 11% (147.2 v. 145.5). Thirty fewer Sectionals were held to date as compared to last year. This has resulted in total table count being down 5%.

Average STaC table count is down 11% (1299.8 v. 1159.6). Four more STaCs were held to date as compared to last year. Total table count decreased by 6%.

Total tournament tables decreased by 6% (21,714.8 tables) with twenty-three fewer tournaments being held.

For more details, please consult the [Tournament Table Counts – October 2018](#) report.

### **Team Building**

In September, all National and Associate National Tournament Directors attended a two-day forum held in Memphis. Scheduled events included meeting and interacting with Headquarters staff on discipline, marketing and technology. This interaction has already produced multiple changes to the support services provided to the field. In addition, the tournament directors reviewed the department's customer service goals, organizational structure, relationships with Tournament Organizers and the new TD Resource Board.

In early August, Bridge Operations launched The TD Resource Board to house and permit "one-stop shopping" for TDs looking for procedures and checklists; frequently used forms and links to organizational reference material, including Board of Director meeting minutes are also available.

### **Promotions**

Nancy Strachan, Nancy Watkins, Joan Paradeis and Robert Maier have been promoted to the position of TD Mentor. We welcome these TDs to their new roles and responsibilities.

## **Club/Player/Director/Member Support**

The Headquarters Bridge Operations team continues to provide phone and email support to club directors along with day-to-day processing of tournament results and sanction applications. This team has also recently refreshed our Conditions of Contest documents in preparation for the rollout of the new Convention Charts. They are also working on developing online versions of our club director and tournament assistant exams.

Field TD teams augment this support by providing after-hours phone support for Club Managers and Club Directors. Through the end of October 2018, a team of 10 part-time Tournament Directors has answered nearly 1500 calls on weekday evenings and over 300 calls on weekends. This team also provides backup support to the Headquarters staff during regular business hours.

The Rulings Box team, led by TDs Bill Michael, Lynn Yokel and Tom Ciacio, includes 12 part-time TDs and has answered approximately 1600 email questions year-to-date. In peak times, members of the Club Support team participate in researching and drafting replies to rulings questions.

A separate team of eight part-time TDs is responsible for reviewing and entering approximately 950 tournament schedules into our systems annually. This team also makes updates, as necessary, to as many as 300 schedules per year.

With the introduction of the Estimator process (which is still being rolled out), Field Operations continues to develop uniform guidelines for staffing regional tournaments. Field Operations is developing and implementing Staffing Process for Regional Tournaments based on the methods used for Staffing NABCs. This tool will assist DiCs and Tournament Organizers to understand the information behind the staffing numbers. We expect to roll this out in the second quarter of 2019.

## **Marketing**

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### **Social Media**

**Facebook** is our primary social media platform utilized to engage our members. As of Nov. 7, the page has 7926 followers and has grown over 15% in the last year. Content is added regularly and features a variety of topics like winners, historic photographs, famous quotes and bridge articles like *It's Your Call* hands (the most popular posts).

We use **Twitter** as a tool to promote the ACBL and bridge to media outlets and connect members to articles written about the organization. As of Nov. 7, our Twitter account has 2528 followers.

Additionally, we have continued to grow the ACBL's **Instagram** page, which initially was created to share photos from the NABC tournaments beginning in the spring of 2017. Regular posts range from submitted photos from clubs, historical event photos, quotes and promotional graphics. As of Nov. 7, the page has 353 followers.

## ***Media Relations***

Media outreach during The Longest Day generated 30 clips, including two broadcast stories featuring interviews with members of the Northeast Louisiana Bridge Club in Monroe and team leaders from Headquarters.

Marketing has also invested in the Cision Communications Cloud®, a public relations database that will allow us to access contact information for more than 1.5 million media contacts across North America. This tool allows us to proactively pitch ACBL content to the best media contacts and build media contact lists to provide to districts and units for them to utilize in their media relations efforts.

The public relations team is also working to develop a Press Center on the ACBL website. The center will include fact sheets, press releases, stock photography and videos, and it is expected to launch in December 2018.

## ***Corporate Sponsorships***

HCL Corporation, an \$8 billion global technology conglomerate based in India, signed on as our presenting corporate sponsor for the Atlanta NABC. Besides benefiting the event attendees directly, through enhanced hospitality and registration gift, this important revenue stream helped fund all the indirect costs the ACBL incurred during the organization of the Atlanta tournament: marketing promotion, operations, personnel and more.

We are currently negotiating with several potential sponsors for 2019 — including a trading company and a medical equipment vendor, among others — and are in the process of developing a sponsorship toolkit to serve as a guide to local committees.

## ***Partnership with the Alzheimer's Association***

This year, we have refocused our efforts on our relationship with the Alzheimer's Association to encourage greater promotion of the mental health benefits of playing bridge as a preventive tool against Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

As a part of this renewal, the Alzheimer's Association has added bridge as one of the 10 Ways to Love Your Brain. Additionally, the medical science team at the Association has compiled a literature review of research completed with a connection to the benefits of playing bridge in the prevention or delay of Alzheimer's and other dementias, with an outreach plan to provide those researchers with information on the Association's granting process and review. The hope is that researchers who have an interest in continuing their studies in this area will apply for a grant from the Association. While there is no guarantee any of these grant requests will be approved — as the field of applicants is highly competitive — the effort to increase awareness in the research community of the Association's interest in supporting this valuable research is a step in the right direction. Additionally, ACBL will be working directly with field staff at the Association to implement a pilot program to incorporate bridge into local community outreach efforts.



## ***The Longest Day***

This year, clubs could choose their Longest Day during the week of the Summer Solstice, June 17-24. In total, almost 500 teams participated in the U.S., up from 300 in 2017.

The Longest Day 2018 raised \$1,176,400 for the Alzheimer's Association, a 14% increase over last year, bringing our six-year total to \$4.7 million.

Clubs in Canada raised over Can\$54,000 in a similar event — A Day of Bridge — to benefit the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

## ***Website***

A new website was launched for NABC promotion: [acbl.org/nabc](http://acbl.org/nabc). On August 23 we launched the pages for Honolulu. Side pages were added with Memphis information on November 1. Our goal is to retire Honolulu's pages on December 5, when we'll promote Memphis to the main stage and add Vegas information on the side. This website had about 11,000 visitors in the first ten weeks.

Online traffic at [www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org) is growing. From January to October we had an average of 450,000 sessions per month, or about 10% more than in 2017. Visitors are engaged, as the average session duration is about 4 minutes.

BridgeFeed—ACBL's online "zine"—has about 17,000 unique visitors a month. Its biggest hit is the quiz "It's Your Call", published on Tuesdays. The editorial team is evaluating content ideas for attracting more readers.

## ***Marketing Solutions, powered by Pianola***

The Pianola email service was upgraded on September 20. Units and districts now have their own contact list, which means that any member who had previously unsubscribed from emails sent by ACBL HQ (over 30% in some units) is now available for unit or district emails. Units and Districts are now the official "senders" of their own messages, and members can select which units and districts are allowed to send news and tournament notifications. We also improved the email templates available. The sender is now clearly identified, and we have darkened the text and lightened the background, which makes messages easier to read.

To learn more about Pianola and to read the Terms of Service, visit [acbl.org/email](http://acbl.org/email)

## ***E-marketing and Communication***

Year to date, the ACBL sent 451 different email campaigns targeting various member segments, for a total of 3.2 million messages. Email topics include ACBL program promotions, member updates, *Tricks of the Trade* and *The Honor Roll* blog posts, new member series emails, tournament announcements, rank change announcements, district newsletters, surveys and more. In addition, Units and Districts sent about 4 million messages during the same period, using Pianola. These numbers do not include automated messages sent to notify tournament players that their scores are available at [live.acbl.org](http://live.acbl.org).

## ***It's Your Call***

Each week, historic It's Your Call problems are emailed to subscribers along with non-members who have played on the Just Play Bridge site. Links to the expert panel answers are also provided. The panel answers were recently moved from the main ACBL site to the BridgeFeed site. This move has resulted in larger audience for BridgeFeed and an increase in daily visitors to the site.

Currently, the emails are sent to about 22,000 bridge players, 3577 of whom self-subscribed. About 34% of recipients open the email each week, and of those, 55% click on the link to expert panel answers. The weekly problems and solutions are also posted on Facebook, where they are extremely popular (see "Social Media").

## ***Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony***

The 2018 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony was a great success and enjoyed by all. One of the highlights of the event was the photo booth provided by our sponsor HCL. Guests really enjoyed being able to take photos with the inductees and clown around a little.

With such a stellar cast of inductees (Ralph Katz, Bobby Levin, Eric Rodwell, Mark Molson and BBO), this year's event broke attendance records and stayed within budget.

## ***Cooperative Advertising Program***

As of November 7, 2018, \$46,413.10 has been reimbursed to 103 clubs and teachers through the Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP). The CAP program will reimburse 50% of the cost of an ad campaign up to a maximum of \$500 per reimbursement. We expect to end the year having paid a total of \$54,000 in reimbursements, a 13% drop from 2017.

## ***Education***

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### ***Best Practices Program***

The new Best Practices Teacher Certification program was rolled out at the Philadelphia NABC. This program replaces the previous Teacher Accreditation Program (TAP) and focuses on training teachers how to teach rather than what to teach.

Optional proficiency assessments are offered after each workshop to allow participants to earn the new Best Practices Teacher Certification. To date 81 teachers have earned the certification.

In addition, three veteran teachers have earned certification as workshop facilitators, which will allow them to lead Best Practices Certification workshops at upcoming NABCs as well as any workshops requested by clubs, units or districts. Three more teachers are scheduled to be certified as facilitators next year.

## School Bridge Program

	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
College	7	6	7	9	3	20	15	29	29	35
High	57	54	51	40	11	29	20	11	14	35
Middle	112	106	102	167	57	68	32	43	33	79
Elementary	78	68	72	89	14	99	66	47	35	49
Total	439		488		537		301		309	

Teacher Stipends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
US	\$111,231	\$138,900	\$69,750	\$46,686	
Canada	\$43,871	\$50,050	\$28,093	\$27,665	
Total	\$155,102	\$188,950	\$97,843	\$74,351	

The drop in school bridge programs over the past few years is largely due to the reclassification of lessons series. Prior to 2016, stipends were paid to teachers for every eight students they instructed. Under that execution, a class of 24 students would have been counted as three separate classes with three separate stipends. With the policy revision, a class of 24 students is counted as one class, and the teacher receives one stipend.

Year to date, we have sent supplies to support 3426 students taking bridge lessons.

## College Programs

The Collegiate Initiative, a joint effort of the ACBL and Educational Foundation, kicked off in the fall of 2017. Together we supported more than 30 schools with student bridge clubs or teams during the 2017/2018 academic year and are already working with over 40 schools for 2018/2019 academic year. In addition, through a partnership with Bridge Base Online (BBO) a free college-only bridge club was formed, known as College Bridge Online Club (CBO Club). Students who joined have access to daily individual practice tournaments, free robot rental and bi-monthly special tournaments with chances to earn masterpoints and win prizes. With almost 33,000 individual entries since October 2017, these online games have become quite popular.

Members of the CBO Club had the opportunity to win travel packages for their teams to play in the 2018 Collegiate Bridge Bowl. Two Special Spring tournaments were held, each awarding four travel packages for up to six players, or five players and a non-playing coach. In addition, two travel packages were awarded to the teams who had the highest level of participation in the daily tournaments during a specified period.

The 2018 Collegiate Bridge Bowl was held at the 2018 Summer NABC. Unlike previous years, the Bridge Bowl was open to all colleges. In all, the Educational Foundation awarded \$36,000 in scholarships for first through fourth place for the team event and first through third place for the new individual competition.

### ***Youth NABC in Atlanta***

A record 240 kids attended the YNABC. Two sessions of bridge were offered each of the three days with team and pair events as well as cardrhook games for newer players. Participants received a T-shirt and book bag and were treated to a hot lunch each day. In addition, youth and their families were invited to attend the awards ceremony. We expect the YNABC in Las Vegas to draw an even larger crowd.

### ***Lifelong Learning***

So far in 2018, more than 1331 students have taken bridge lessons through 67 programs at 29 college or university lifelong learning programs. This is a 60% increase over the number of students in 2017 and a 50% increase in the number of participating schools.

ACBL supports the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) programs at colleges and universities all over the country and is now an officially recognized OLLI curriculum resource.

### ***Learn Bridge in a Day?® & Notrump in a Day***

The ACBL hosts a *Learn Bridge in A Day? (LBIAD)* seminar and corresponding teacher training course at each NABC. Almost 1100 people have received an introduction to bridge through this class so far.

In addition to LBIAD, we now also offer Patty Tucker's *Notrump in A Day* at NABCs. This has helped to expand our educational offerings for the crucial audience of Intermediate/Newcomer players. More than 120 students having taken the class so far.