

ACBL MANAGEMENT REPORT

Summer 2018 – Atlanta

Club & Membership Services

Membership

Through June, ACBL membership stands at 166,698. This reflects a decrease of 95 since January 1, 2018. We have added 6,196 new members year-to-date. This is an increase of 3.5% from the same time last year. Full membership statistics can be viewed at:

[Membership Trend Report June 2018.pdf](#)

The membership billing schedule for hardcopy and email notices was updated as of June 1 to increase response time and save on expenses for printing and mailing. We had a 25% increase in direct online membership payments.

During May and June, a total of 4,510 lapsed members were contacted by telephone. 476 members paid because of the call for a success rate of 10.55%. Reasons given for not renewing include health, age, no longer playing, only playing social bridge and not interested.

Through mid-June the Member Services employees have answered approximately 20,000 calls from members renewing and asking questions regarding their membership, masterpoint totals and questions, change of addresses, password assistance to MyACBL, etc.

Through mid-June the Club Services employees have answered over 10,000 calls from club managers and directors regarding club reports, special events, game sanctions and club update information.

Temporary memberships became available in early March 2018. We have had 844 join ACBL as on a trial basis. 172 of these new members have renewed their membership for one or more years while 163 are still in their one-month trial period.

Junior Membership: As of July 10, ACBL has 1,654 junior members. While absolute numbers are still modest, this is an 22% increase from July 2017 (1,356 members). Most of this increase is a direct result of the College Programs, which include the Collegiate Initiative (Coaching), College Bridge Online Club and the Bridge Bowl. We'll continue our efforts to promote the game of bridge among K-12 and college students.

Club Tables

Face-to-face club table count is down 2.39% as compared to May 2017. Total table count through May is 1,310,560 of which 428,783 are from online games. The full report can be found at:

[Club Table Report May 2018.pdf](#)

Club Reports

There are approximately 3,000 bridge clubs with ACBL-sanctioned games. In an effort to post masterpoints quicker, reduce cost and save time, we have been calling and working with clubs that send manual financial and masterpoint reports and fees each month. There are now 63 clubs that mail us manual reports and fees. In addition, there are 25 clubs that submit their reports electronically and pay by check instead of credit card.

ACBL-wide Special Events

In 2018 we extended and improved our ACBL-wide events calendar, offering clubs and members more opportunities to play and compete for overall masterpoints. We also increased our promotional efforts, to motivate more clubs and members to participate in those events. In the first half of 2018, club participation in ACBL-wide events increased 55%, while total tables went up over 60%, when compared to the same period of last year.

The most recent example of a new and exciting game is the Summer Instant Matchpoint Game, held on July 9. As you know, the traditional IMG event is held in October and features hand analyses by Larry Cohen. The IMG is, by far, the most popular ACBL-wide game, so in 2018 we added a second event, this time with written and video commentary by Sylvia Shi and Daniel Korbel. We still don't have stats, but with almost 300 clubs registered, we are optimistic that this will be a very successful bridge event.

Finance

Year-to-Date Financial Statements

Revenues and expenses are tracking close to budget resulting in a \$42K better than budget operating loss of \$152K. The year-to-date investment loss of \$65K lowers the net loss to \$217K. Year-to-date, \$324K of the \$511K capital budget has been spent. Statements can be found at:

[ACBL YTD Financials - Atlanta 2018.pdf](#)

Impaired Asset Write-off

It is expected that a \$375K impaired asset will be written-off in 2018. The CRM software project is being re-evaluated and it is unlikely that the initially selected Microsoft CRM software will be a

viable solution. The write-off amount represents the capitalized software and development costs directly related to the attempted Microsoft CRM implementation.

Insurance Renewal

The League’s general liability and directors and officers insurance policies were renewed as of May 1st; there was a 1% increase in premium.

Human Resources

Headcount

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Headquarters	59	1	60
Field	38	122	160
			220

New Hires/Promotions

Lori Pope, Public Relations Coordinator, started 2/19/18

Communications and Public Relations experience with Baptist Memorial Hospital and American Heart Association

Barbara Bell-Cox, Club & Members Service Representative, started 3/26/18

Over 15 years’ experience in hotel and hospitality industries

Manny Karkowsky, Controller, started 3/19/18

7 years’ progressive experience in accounting and management roles

Yolanda McMillan, Marketing Data Analyst, started 5/7/18

Analyst experience at the Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce; additional experience in IT Development and Engineering roles

Dena Hoffman, Accounts Receivable Coordinator, started 7/16/18

Experience in administrative and accounting roles, most recently with our audit firm

Nancy Boyd, Assistant Director of Field Operations, promoted 6/18/18

Over 22 years of experience with the ACBL; National TD rank

Open Positions

Mentor – 3 openings:

- Area B or C/District 1 or 2
- Area E/District 13 or 14
- Area L or K/District 7, 9, or 10

Headquarters Improvements

Lighting Upgrades: All lighting has been changed to LED. We have approval for incentives (paid by Entergy) of up to \$10,000 (five-year warranty includes all fixtures, lamps and controls; lamps and fixtures have a minimum life of 20,000 hours).

Retro-Commissioning: The HVAC system has been optimized to achieve long-term energy and operational savings. We are already seeing a 45% reduction, year over year, in monthly energy costs.

Building envelope upgrades: Door sweeps and gaskets installed; window sealings. It is projected that the \$105,871 cost of this work will provide an annual savings of \$32,604, with a simple payback in 3.25 years.

Information Technology

Software Development

ACBLscore

ACBLscore 8.27 was released to support the following bug fixes:

- Correct pricing for ACBL-Wide Junior Fund Games
- Correct pricing for ACBL-Wide Matchpoint Digital Games
- Correct masterpoint awards for ACBL-Wide Matchpoint Digital Game – Section Tops are awarded gold masterpoints

Masterpoint Engine (ACBL Live for Clubs) Project

- Project moving along well with goal of being fully implemented in 2019. We are currently able to:
 - Accept the upload of ACBLscore gamefiles, hand records and .BWS files in a new gateway
 - Generate masterpoints for all club pair games

- Display the results of games including high point cards, contracts, and hand records
- Currently working on:
 - Creating Double Dummy and PAR scores
 - Accepting PBN files
 - Generating masterpoints for STaC games
 - Generating financials for each gamefile uploaded
- To be completed prior to release:
 - Creating masterpoints for club team games
 - Incorporating new masterpoints and financials into monthly cycles
 - Branding new version of ACBLscore that allows clubs to submit gamefiles to have masterpoints calculated and financials generated.
 - Finalize how financials are processed by Accounting and stored in Microsoft Great Plains Accounting system

AS/400 Replacement Project

- Steering Committee created in May consisting of:
 - Mitch Hodus
 - Joe Jones
 - Dan Storch
 - Carol Robertson
 - Gary Blevins
 - Susie Cordell (Consultant)
 - Paul Cuneo (Board Member)
- The Steering Committee is responsible for driving the AS/400 replacement project to a successful completion and ensuring that it stays on track financially
 - The Steering Committee decided to shut down the Microsoft Dynamics CRM project in late May to save approximately 40 hours a week of duplicate work required to keep the CRM and AS/400 in sync
 - Employees have returned to using AS/400 programs
- All departments have submitted functional requirements for the applications and capabilities they need moved off the AS/400
- Senior Management team to meet to confirm vision and goals of project in mid-July

- Senior Management team to meet to review requirements and approve set of requirements to be used to choose replacement products after NABC
- Steering Committee hopes to have a plan vetted by the Fall NABC.
- Some functions are already moving off the AS/400:
 - Club Sanction Renewal application was moved off the AS/400 last year
 - Clubs Department testing web-based applications to replace functionality found on the AS/400
 - Clubs Department testing “Find a club” and “Find a teacher” functionality

Infrastructure and Operations

- Completed PCI certification work for 2018.
 - Created new IT Security Policies and Procedures to support PCI
 - Implemented new administrative tools and systems to support PCI including
 - Multi-factor authentication
 - 90-day password change and strong password policy
 - Centralized logging
 - Enforcing IT security awareness training
 - Implementing email phishing awareness including new “Outside Email” notifications
 - Enhanced security monitoring
 - ACBL now runs quarterly vulnerability tests on all systems facing the internet and year vulnerability tests of all internal systems.
 - Based on results of our tests, the team remediates all vulnerabilities listed as “Critical” or “High” as this is industry best practice
 - Upgraded the operating systems of a number of servers and upgraded the versions of PHP to remediate most recent vulnerability findings
 - To remain PCI certified, the ACBL must continue to scan and remediate all findings. Most recent scan and “pass” was completed on July 7, 2018.
- Currently working on migrating local servers that contain website-static content AWS servers
- Currently working on implementing a centralized job server so that IT can view all scheduled and running jobs in a single system

Bridge & Field Operations

Bridge Operations

Under the leadership of Brian Weikle, the Bridge Operations team has managed 6,283 calls in the first 6.5 months of the year from Club Managers and Directors with an average hold time of :44 seconds. The team stationed at Headquarters has been supplemented by part time Tournament Directors allowing us to greatly extend the number of hours support. These services have been especially helpful during Special Games and the rollout of technology upgrades.

Tournament Directors

The mentoring process introduced at the beginning of 2018 is continuing as planned. There are 25 Mentors developing 122 part time Tournament Directors. Both Area Managers and Mentors are engaged with training and supervision of directors on-site at many tournaments. These trainings are improving the knowledge and skills of the full-time Tournament Directors of the future.

We are also pleased to announce that Nancy Boyd has joined us at HQ as the Assistant Director of Field Operations. Her daily presence in the office will allow us to accelerate several projects and provide our members with even better service.

Tournaments

Average **Regional** table count per tournament was down 5.9% (1287.6 v.1211.2). Two fewer Regionals were held to date as compared to last year. This has resulted in total table count being down 8.8%.

Average **Sectional** table count is up 0.1% (153.9 v. 154.1). Sixteen fewer Sectionals were held to date as compared to last year. This has resulted in total table count being down 3.2%.

Average **STaC** table count is down 7.6% (1289.4 v. 1190.9). Two fewer STaCs were held to date as compared to last year. This has resulted in total table count decreasing by 11.8%.

Total tournament tables decreased by 9.4% (20,634.8 tables) with twenty fewer tournaments being held:

[June 2018TC.pdf](#)

Marketing

Social Media

Facebook is our primary social media platform utilized to engage our members. As of July 10, the page has 7709 followers and has grown by more than 15% in the last year. Content is added regularly and features a variety of topics including archived *It's Your Call* hands (the most popular posts), winners, historic photographs and bridge articles.

We have continued to utilize Twitter as a tool to promote the ACBL and bridge to media outlets and connect members to articles written about the organization. As of July 10, our Twitter account has 2,515 followers, a number that continues to grow.

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 July 10, the page has 240 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 will allow us to proactively pitch ACBL content to the best media contacts and build media contact lists to provide districts and units to utilize in their media relations efforts.

Additionally, the public relations team is working to develop a Press Center on the ACBL website, which will be a helpful tool for media seeking information regarding the game of bridge and the organization. The center will include fact sheets, press releases, stock photography and videos, and it is expected to launch in August 2018.

Alzheimer's Association Partnership

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 will consider funding research grants with a focus on investigating the benefits of bridge play in the fight against dementia.

The Longest Day

This year, clubs could choose their Longest Day during the week of the Summer Solstice, June 17-27. In total, 290 clubs in the U.S. officially registered to participate, up from 192 clubs in 2017. In addition, many participated by playing games and holding fundraising events while not registering.

As of July 12, more than \$944,000 has been donated online to the Alzheimer's Association, with checks and funds still being mailed to the organization. This is a 52% increase over the same period last year, and based on feedback, total funds raised are expected to reach over \$1 million this year.

Clubs in Canada participated in a similar event, *A Day of Bridge*, to benefit the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

Corporate Sponsorships

The NABCs are a great opportunity for corporations to connect with our membership and expose their brand and products. At the same time, NABC-related expenses are always increasing, so it is critical for ACBL to untap additional revenue opportunities that help offset those costs and reduce their impact on our membership. The ACBL is actively pursuing partnerships with selected corporate sponsors at the NABCs and other events.

HCL Corporation, an \$8 billion global technology conglomerate based in India, signed on as our signature sponsor for the Atlanta NABC. HCL is a long supporter of bridge, having hosted the leading Indian Championship for 16 years. Through this sponsorship, we were also able to provide additional funds for hospitality and the registration gifts.

Marketing Solutions – powered by Pianola

Just in the first six months of this year, 174 districts/units sent about 2.5 million messages to our members using Pianola. As printing and posting costs increase, many units and districts are already distributing newsletters and tournament notification in digital format only and switching to email as their main communication channel for engaging with their members.

For that reason, the ACBL and Pianola are renewing the contract so all units and districts can continue to use this service at no cost. We are also improving the service: by mid-August 2018,

Pianola will start sending messages directly on behalf of the district/unit. With this change, each district and unit will have its own unsubscribe list, which means that if a member cancels its email subscription from ACBL Headquarters, they will still be able to receive messages from their district and/or unit. Additional information will be sent to all Marketing Solutions users once we have a firm date for the update.

To learn more about Pianola and to read the Terms of Service, visit acbl.org/email

E-marketing and Communication

During the first six months of 2018, the ACBL launched 288 different email campaigns targeting various member segments, for a total of 1.8 million messages. Email topics included the following: ACBL program promotions, *Tricks of the Trade* blog posts, new member series emails, tournament announcements, rank change announcements, district newsletters, surveys and more.

New-Member Email Series

For this email series, every new member is given an email each month for the first year of membership. Topics range from becoming acclimated to the bridge world to how to use ACBL to help you on your bridge journey. Links to lessons from Eddie Kantar are also included.

On a typical month, we send more than 10,000 new member emails, and more than half of recipients open the email. Of them, about 17% click on links in the email. These rates are significantly above industry average and show the interest new members have with staying connected with the ACBL throughout their first year.

Website

Traffic at acbl.org continues to grow: in the first half of 2018 we had a monthly average of 150,000 unique users, 7% more than last year. Web sessions increased over 15%, which means users are visiting our site more frequently, reaching an average of 450,000 sessions per month. The website has been instrumental in increasing member interest and participation in our ACBL-wide events.

Our team continues its efforts to improve content clarity and simplify navigation. Our new search tool Cludo supported over 50,000 queries a month in 2018. While the success rate exceeds 98.5%, we need to continuously improve it to support more complex queries.

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 (on the ACBL website) are also provided. Currently, the emails are sent to about 21,500 bridge players, 3,207 of

whom self-subscribed. About 38% 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 is on track to be the best attended in the last six years. With three days to go before reservations close, there are 199 expected guests with ticket sales of \$10,725. Inductees this year are Ralph Katz, Bobby Levin, Eric Rodwell, Mark Molson and Bridge Base Online.

This year, the ceremony will include a complimentary photo booth, thanks to our corporate sponsor HCL.

Cooperative Advertising Program

As of July 10, 2018, \$24,680.42 has been reimbursed to 61 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.

Education

Best Practices Program

At the Philadelphia NABC and Gatlinburg Regional, the new Best Practices Teacher Certification program was piloted. The program, replacing the previous Teacher Accreditation Program (TAP), does not advocate the use of any proprietary bridge lessons and was designed to train teachers how to teach rather than what to teach.

After gathering input from more than 400 bridge teachers, a team of three adult learning experts recommended 20 best practices for teaching beginning bridge. Grace Major, winner of two national awards for training design, a former director of the Instructional Systems Association and 20-year managing partner of a leading training company, was enlisted by ACBL to design the workshop based on this feedback.

Grace worked closely with veteran teachers Betty Starzec and Carol Mathews as well as the ACBL Education Department to design the simulation-based and highly experiential workshop using the best practices as the foundation.

A system for assessing teacher’s best practice proficiency was tested in Gatlinburg, revised and will be further tested in Atlanta so that ACBL’s endorsement of bridge teachers can signify more than class attendance.

College Programs

The Collegiate Initiative, a joint effort of the ACBL and Educational Foundation, kicked off in the fall of 2017. Through email campaigns to college students, ACBL members affiliated with colleges and local volunteers, we were able to provide support to more than 30 schools create or grow their student bridge club and/or team.

Support was provided in the form of teaching materials, bridge supplies and stipends for teachers/coaches. 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 over 24,000 individual entries since October 2017 (about 88 a day), these online games have become a popular part of the Collegiate Initiative.

Members of the CBO Club had the opportunity to win travel packages for their teams to play in the 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 will be played at the Summer NABC. This year the scholarships will be awarded for first through fourth place. The first-place team will win \$15,000, second place \$10,000, third place \$5,000 and fourth place \$2,500.

Ten teams were awarded travel packages to attend the event, but unlike previous years, colleges without travel packages could still sign up to compete in the team event. Schools winning travel packages are Carleton College, Columbia University, Georgia Tech, Harvey Mudd College, Northwestern University, Princeton University, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, the University of Maryland, and the University of Minnesota. Georgia Tech will be fielding two more teams, bringing the field to 12, the largest we've had.

In addition to the team events, we will also be hosting the first annual Collegiate Bridge Bowl Individual, August 3-4. This event is open to any eligible college student and will award scholarships through third place. The scholarship for first place is \$2,000, second place is \$1,000, and third place is \$500.

Youth NABC in Atlanta

As of July 11, 221 youth have registered for the YNABC. Pre-registration is not required, but those who registered by June 15 are guaranteed a T-shirt and bag. Last year’s YNABC in Toronto hosted a record 237 kids over three days. We are expecting at least 250 this 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	
High	57	54	51	40	11	29	20	11	14	
Middle	112	106	102	167	57	68	32	43	33	
Elementary	78	68	72	89	14	99	66	47	35	
Total	439		488		537		301		111	

Teacher Stipends	2014	2015	2016	2017
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 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 2206 students taking bridge lessons. This is 18% less than last year, but we expect orders to pick up in the fall when the school year starts.

Lifelong Learning

So far in 2018, more than 600 students have taken bridge lessons through 32 programs at 18 college or university lifelong learning programs. This is a 42% increase over the number of students who participated during the same time period of 2017, and we expect even more when the school year begins in the fall.

ACBL supported the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) programs at University of South Florida, University of North Florida, University of Georgia, California State University at Long

Beach, University of Delaware, University of Alabama Huntsville, Kennesaw State University, Bradley University, Oklahoma State University and the University of Missouri. We are now an officially recognized OLLI curriculum resource. In addition to OLLI, we also support bridge through several other unassociated lifelong learning programs.

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. Since our first event at the 2013 NABC in Atlanta, more than 1,000 people have received an introduction to bridge through this class. Reservations are now open for the LBIAD at the 2018 Summer NABC in Atlanta, acbl.org/reglbiad.

At the Summer NABC in Toronto, ACBL partnered with Patty Tucker to launch her new class, Notrump in A Day. This has helped to expand our educational offerings for the crucial audience of Intermediate/Newcomer players, and the response has been very positive with more than 120 students having taken the class so far. It is a good fit for beginning players who are starting to learn different conventions as well as more experienced players who may have picked up some bad habits and want to nail the fundamentals.