

GOVERNING ARL: A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The ARL Board established the Task Force on Governance in early 2004 to review current practices and consider options for restructuring Board nominations, elections, and other aspects of governance of the organization. The Board's goal was to establish a process that advances the interests of the organization and is understood and supported by member representatives. Over the last seven years, 47% of all ARL member representatives named to their positions were new to ARL. With such a large proportion of new and relatively new member representatives, it is appropriate for ARL to assess its governance and ensure that it is appropriately structured for the Association's needs today and into the future.

The Task Force Process

The Task Force on Governance met several times, both face-to-face and by conference call, and held discussion groups with members at the May 2004 Membership Meeting. In addition, members of the Task Force conducted a confidential telephone survey of individual interviews with 114 member representatives. The results of these interviews informed the Task Force's discussions and these recommendations.

The members of the Task Force on Governance considered it a privilege to solicit input from ARL member representatives. The responses were constructive, candid, thoughtful, and diverse. Each interview revealed one or more unique aspects in the representative's thinking about the organization, reminding the Task Force members of the value that ARL representatives bring to the Association.

In terms of process, all interviews were word-processed by the Task Force member, sent to the Task Force chair, and then submitted to ARL and aggregated so that Task Force members could look at all responses. As those interviewed will recall, all responses were anonymous.

ARL member representatives indicated that they appreciated having the opportunity to express their views. In the interviews they assumed the value of ARL and suggested mechanisms for improvement. While each individual's conception of a perfect ARL differed, the committee heard a number of themes: ARL needs to become more transparent to its member representatives; ARL's processes and communication need to be opened up so that all ARL member libraries have a real stake in the organization; the roles of the Board, Executive Committee, member representatives, Executive Director, and staff require clarity; a substantive orientation, both oral and written, of new ARL member representatives should be initiated; and finally, ARL must become a more welcoming organization. The Task Force

recommendations are based upon these themes. Following member discussion at the October 2004 Membership Meeting, the Task Force revised and finalized its recommendations to the Board. A summary of those recommendations follows:

Communications and Orientation

- Clarify and communicate ARL's electoral and governance processes.

- Revise and strengthen ARL's orientation program for new library representatives and new ARL Board members.

- Enhance communication within ARL, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for member involvement.

Nominating Process/Nominating Committee

- Expand the size of the Nominating Committee to five individuals, appointed by the Chair, in consultation with the Board.

- Have the Immediate Past President serve as chair of the Nominating Committee.

- Clarify the role of the Executive Director in the nominating process.

- Clarify the Nominating Committee's charge.

- Make the nominating process more transparent and systematic.

Board Composition/Selection of Board and President

- Maintain the current Board size and increase Board interaction with committee chairs.

- Continue to use a Nominating Committee slate, ratified by the membership, to select Board members.

- Continue to have the Board elect the ARL President, and have the election ratified by the membership at the Business Meeting.

Committees

- Reduce nearly exclusive reliance on Standing Committees for member representative involvement and offer other forums for participation, such as task forces, affinity groups, etc.

- Clarify and communicate the process for selecting committee chairs and committee members.

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of committees and committee chairs.

- Continue to strengthen connections between committee chairs and the Board.

The full task force report explains the recommendations in detail and the rationale behind them. It is available on the ARL Web site http://www.arl.org/arl/strategic_taskforces/.