

Themes within the ARL Strategic Plan 2010–2012

Charles B. Lowry, ARL Executive Director

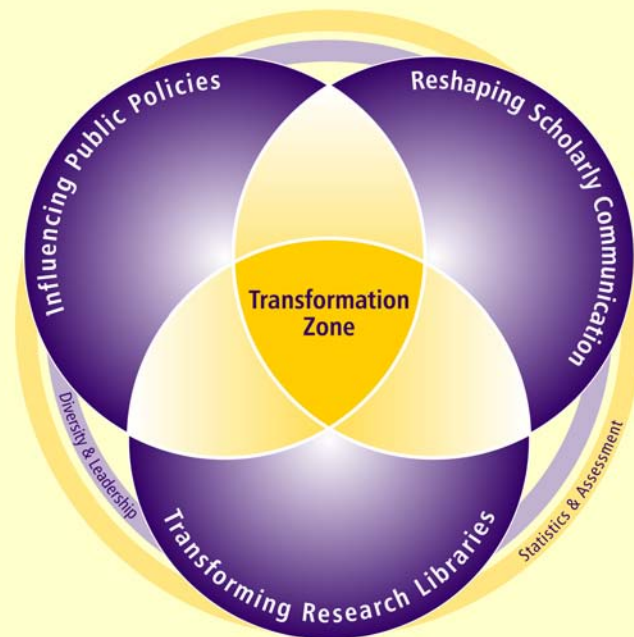
Introduction

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Strategic Plan, adopted in 2004 and revised during 2009, frames the work of the Association within Strategic Directions and Enabling Capabilities (see illustration below). This organization is rational and purposeful and focused to meet the challenges of the ARL Mission Statement.

ARL Mission Statement

ARL influences the changing environment of scholarly communication and the public policies that affect research libraries and the diverse communities they serve. ARL pursues this mission by advancing the goals of its member research libraries, providing leadership in public and information policy to the scholarly and higher education communities, fostering the exchange of ideas and expertise, facilitating the emergence of new roles for research libraries, and shaping a future environment that leverages its interests with those of allied organizations.

ARL Strategic Directions & Enabling Capabilities 2010–2012



The illustration conveys the conceptual model that underpins the work and close relationships between and amongst the Strategic Directions and Enabling Capabilities, and highlights the transformation zone that lies at their intersection. Each of the domains circumscribed by the three Strategic Directions is dynamically and radically evolving, often with influences on the others. Research libraries remain vital by embracing opportunities to improve their

performance *even as changes are still taking place* in the realms of public policies and in systems of scholarly communication, thereby advancing a strategic transformation locally in ways that enhance research and scholarship at each member institution. Accordingly, ARL maintains a strong capacity for advocacy and influence, for measurement and assessment, for environmental scanning and strategic thinking, and for developing leadership for positive change. Some of the ways ARL works in the transformation zone between and among the Strategic Directions identified above include:

- Analyze trends and needs, and identify solutions.
- Assess policies, new models, new strategies.
- Advocate for positive change.
- Enable collective member library responses and action.
- Articulate and promote best practices.
- Extend community and expertise through alliances and partnerships.
- Serve as a convener of member libraries initiating experimental projects.

The Nature and Influence of ARL's Membership

ARL's strategic plan was reviewed and updated by member library representatives in the same year that the world economy was in a freefall, with conditions unmatched since the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the Association was established. The contemporary economic circumstances were a stark reminder to this generation of research library leaders that ARL's very reason for being—and its greatest asset—is its ability to convene the leadership of major research libraries and foster collective positions and actions that can achieve an impact greater than would be possible if undertaken by one or a smaller number of libraries.

ARL represents 124 large and distinctive research libraries in the US and Canada. Speaking with one voice, these institutions exert a significant level of influence within the North American research and higher education marketplace and communities. And when ARL libraries partner with other kinds of libraries and with other organizations in common cause, they further extend their influence. ARL's new strategic plan recognizes this strength and underscores the need for the Association and its member libraries to have a bias for collective actions and

collaboration. The new plan also builds on long-standing guiding principles articulated in 2005 and reaffirmed in the recent review process by the Strategic Plan Review Task Force (see accompanying statement of Guiding Principles).

Guiding Principles

The following principles guided the ARL Strategic Planning Review Task Force in its work. The “we” in these statements refers to the Association.

Distinctive Mission

- We complement and build on the strengths of other organizations.
- We rethink historic assumptions.
- Our policy positions guide our strategies.

Community

- We are a member-driven organization.
- We are accountable to our members.
- We provide opportunity for full engagement by all member representatives.
- We respect the diversity of our membership.

Intellectual Freedom and Scholarly Communication

- We promote and advocate barrier-free access to research and educational information resources.

Collaboration

- We build relationships with other higher education societies and associations that share our common goals.
- We work closely with other library-related associations, councils, federations, etc.

Diversity

- We encourage and support our members as they strive to reflect society’s diversity in their staffing, collections, leadership, and programs.
- We strive to employ a diverse staff.

Challenges ARL Will Address in the Next Three Years

What problems will ARL be addressing during the three-year life of the new strategic plan? The plan identifies challenges that research libraries face in common and, in particular, those where ARL can play a role in finding a solution that can be achieved principally through collective action and with modest resources. These are all challenges that are mutable and, if not soluble in the next three years, should at least be positively influenced through our concerted actions. In looking across the trends that are underway within and among the three Strategic Directions, the following large and long-term problems emerge.

• **Out-of-Balance Intellectual Property Policies**

Complex policy and legal environments for intellectual property in Canada and the United States are dominated by an emphasis on commercial goals.

For example, this occurs despite the US constitutional requirement that copyright is granted “to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing *for limited times* to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.” In some instances, higher education communities lack unifying positions on different intellectual property domains (patents, copyrights, public domain), and adopt highly varied policy and practice at the local level.

- **The Absence of Mechanisms for Research Libraries to Influence the Marketplace**

Many consider the scholarly communication environment to be dysfunctional and fragmented, evincing monopolistic characteristics, and failing to deliver all disciplinary research at a reasonable price and on an equal footing. There is an absence of robust and sufficiently powerful mechanisms for cooperative action by the research library community to influence markets and undertake common project development.

- **Policies and Practices that Inhibit Innovation and Enduring Access**

Accessible technologies and ubiquitous networks have transformed individual expectations about access to information and methods of communication. New forms of publishing and innovative scholarly products have emerged and in some disciplines have sparked entirely new systems of scholarly communications. Many public and institutional policies and practices lag behind these changes and need to be updated in order to support rather than inhibit innovations and enduring access to scholarship and information.

- **The Need to Reconfigure Research Library Organizations and Services**

The value of research libraries to the research enterprise is changing. Especially in a constrained economic climate, a new place must be created for the research library that recognizes and leverages the “Google world” and the emergence of collaborative research. New strategies are needed to reconfigure research library organizations and services and build increasingly diverse and talented staff to provide leadership and technical skills that are responsive to this rapidly changing environment.

With these long-term problems clearly in mind, ARL can exploit varied tactics for moving forward the research library agenda. The outcomes designated in the 2010–2012 Strategic Plan provide a framework for ARL's work and the strategies suggest areas where actions may bear results. The problems noted above are the ones we seek to address across ARL programs and in close cooperation with our partners, the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) and the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), as well as with any other allied organization that shares with us common memberships or goals.

The Roles of ARL's Enabling Capabilities

ARL's budget and staff are organized around the plan's Strategic Directions and Enabling Capabilities. The Strategic Directions are described fully in the plan that follows. Enabling Capabilities are categories of effort that provide support across the entire organization. They include Governance, Membership Meetings, Communications & Alliances, as well as two key areas that warrant a closer look to illustrate their contributions to ARL's agenda: Statistics & Assessment and Diversity & Leadership.

Statistics & Assessment

The ARL Statistics & Assessment program focuses on describing and measuring the performance of research libraries and their contributions to research, scholarship, and community service. ARL serves a leadership role in the development, testing, and application of academic library performance measures, statistics, and management tools. The program provides analysis and reporting of quantitative and qualitative indicators of library collections, personnel, and services by using a variety of evidence-gathering mechanisms and tools.

Library assessment has gained in prominence as institutional calls for greater accountability abound. The Library Assessment Conference (co-sponsored by the University of Virginia Library and the University of Washington Libraries) is a biennial event gathering a vibrant community of practitioners and researchers engaged with the critical mission of demonstrating the value of the library in today's ever-changing environment.

The recent strategic planning process reinforced the Statistics & Assessment program's collaboration with the Transforming Research Libraries Strategic Direction. There is a need to articulate transformed library roles and to

accelerate the development of qualitative indicators of the contributions of research libraries, as well as tools that research libraries may use locally to demonstrate their value. The Statistics & Assessment capability also contributes to the other Strategic Directions by providing data about the characteristics and use of research libraries that describes the transformations underway and can be used to advocate for positive change.

Diversity & Leadership

ARL's Diversity Programs recruit people from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups into careers in research libraries and prepare minority librarians for advancement into leadership positions in ARL libraries. An annual Leadership Symposium—a component of the ARL Diversity Programs—provides MLIS students with programming on the strategic directions of ARL as well as on issues related to transitioning into, and building career networks in, research libraries.

In addition to those being undertaken through the Diversity Programs, ARL's other leadership development efforts have been focused on two priorities: executive leadership development and succession planning in research libraries. The most recent strategic planning process reinforced these priorities as key to preparing the next generation of library directors and preparing senior library administrators to take on the challenges of the transformed research library.

The centerpiece of ARL's efforts to pursue succession planning is the Research Library Leadership Fellows (RLLF) Program. The RLLF is ARL's executive leadership program, designed and sponsored by ARL member libraries. The program offers an opportunity for development of future senior-level leaders in large research libraries, exposing and engaging library staff with the potential for leadership to themes and institutions that enhance their preparedness to be a dean or director in an ARL library.

Beginning in 2010, ARL's diversity and leadership development activities are being brought under the guidance of a new Board committee on Diversity & Leadership, with the goal of creating a nexus that will provide a pipeline from Diversity Programs into the senior leadership development program. The work in the arenas of diversity and leadership makes a direct contribution to the Transforming Research Libraries Strategic Direction, which seeks to have a diverse and growing body of professionals prepared to develop new roles and work in new modes. In addition, success in this work contributes to the fulfillment of mandates for increased advocacy that recur within the goals of the other Strategic Directions.

Identifying ARL's Action Agenda

By deliberate decision, the three-year plan omits a detailed action agenda. Action agendas are developed on an ongoing basis by ARL committees, working groups, and task forces populated largely by member library representatives. The committee structure reflects the framework of the Strategic Plan (see illustration on page 9), with three Strategic Direction Steering Committees carrying primary responsibility for defining priorities in their arenas. The Board has final authority with respect to adoption of the action agenda.

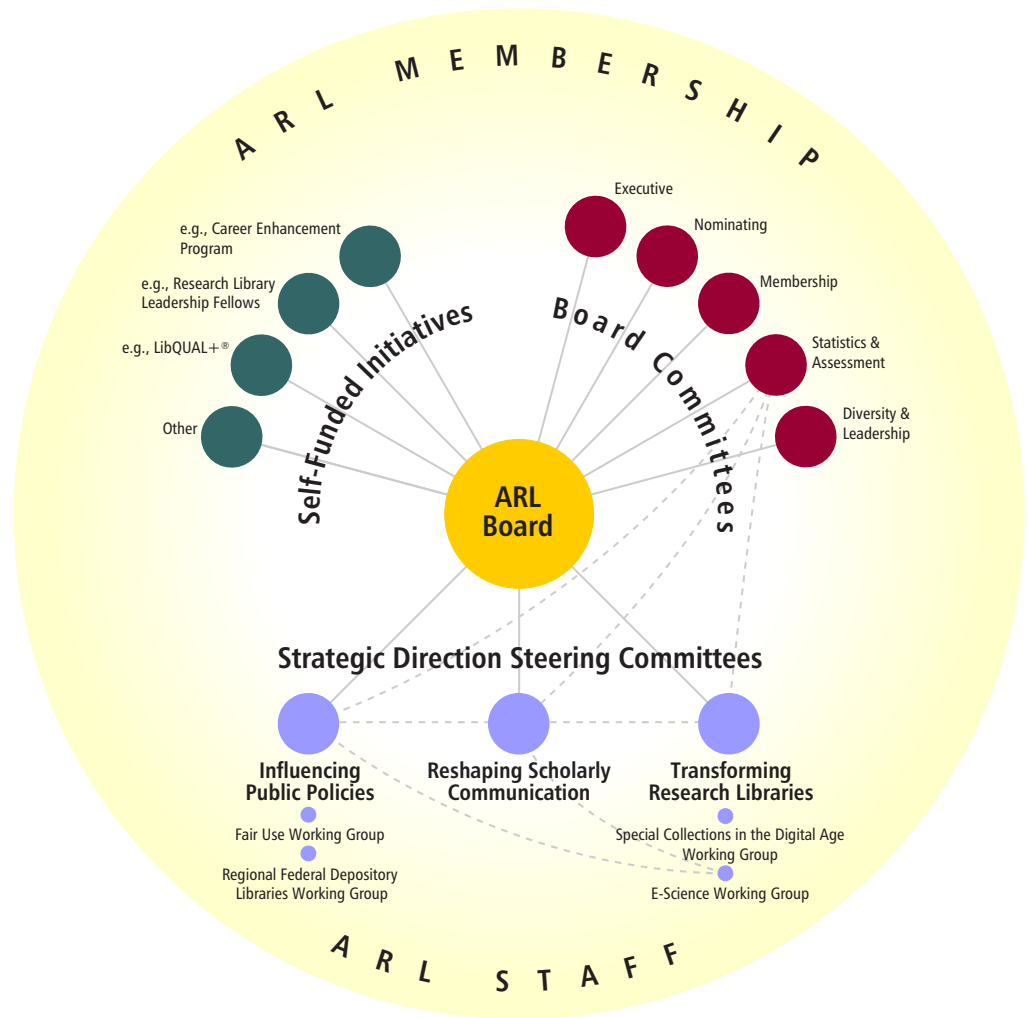
The continuous communications among members of the ARL Board (which includes the chairs of the three Strategic Direction committees), committees, working groups, task forces, and ARL staff creates synergies and mitigates against the potential for efforts to become silos or miss relevant trends or initiatives. Such cohesion and synergy is also served by periodically assessing progress in the context of the large-scale problems such as those suggested above.

Presented in the context of these problems, below are examples from ARL's 2010 action agendas, efforts that tie directly to the Strategic Plan's Outcomes and Strategies. This illustrative and thematic presentation of the action agenda reflects how the Strategic Directions and Enabling Capabilities work together.

A Thematic Illustration of ARL's 2010 Action Agenda

- **Influencing Out-of-Balance Intellectual Property Policies**
 - Develop strategies to resolve orphan-works challenges.
 - Launch copyright-education campaigns that lead to development of a code for best practices for fair use in libraries and availability of resources for explaining author-rights options in a Google world.
 - Advance user rights under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and the Copyright Act.
- **Strengthening Mechanisms for Research Libraries to Influence Marketplace**
 - Document and communicate the impact of the current economic environment on research library budgets.

- Promote language for inclusion in library license agreements that will enable flexible reuse of any scholarly content created by authors affiliated with the institution.
- Advance appropriate collective membership action in the marketplace.
- **Promoting Policies and Practices that Support Innovation and Enduring Access**
 - Support legislation and executive action to promote public access to federally funded research.
 - Examine library options to support at-risk print journals.
 - Accelerate contacts between university presses and research libraries and foster opportunities for collaborations.
 - Advocate for policies and strategies that enable reform of the Federal Depository Library Program.
 - Promote the development of expertise in data curation in research libraries.
- **Clarifying Strategies to Reconfigure Research Library Organizations and Services**
 - Articulate visions for the 21st-century research library and define elements for describing their value and contributions in support of research and scholarship.
 - Promote new models for preservation, management, and access to monographs, for both existing print collections and e-books, including national strategies that foster efficient use of the numerous storage facilities managed by members.
 - Advance collaborative/coordinated efforts among ARL members in the management and preservation of digital special collections.
 - Strengthen linkages between diversity recruitment strategies and ARL’s succession planning program for research library director positions.



ARL's Committee Structure

The current roster of ARL committees is posted on the ARL Web site at <http://www.arl.org/arl/governance/cmte.shtml>.

As needed, the Steering Committees establish subgroups: working groups to monitor certain areas and to offer advice on an ongoing basis, or task forces to fast track analysis of a specific question. Through these committees and other groups, member library representatives continuously collaborate with ARL staff to develop, prioritize, and assess actions and next steps. The resulting action agendas are summarized through working documents formally called "Review of Activities, Projects, and Priorities"; more commonly called the "grid reports," a shorthand name derived from their format. As working documents, the grids breathe life into the Strategic Plan by detailing the steps planned or taken to advance an outcome. The grids are updated quarterly and posted on the members-only directors wiki, and reported on at semi-annual ARL Business Meetings.

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<http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/rli/archive/rli268.shtml>.