

ARL's Strategic Plan, 2005–09: Background & Assessment of Progress

This report was prepared as background for comment and membership-wide discussion at the ARL Business Meeting, October 16, 2008. In addition, a two-page scenario for a membership review and update of the Strategic Plan will be made available at the ARL Membership Meeting on October 15.

BACKGROUND

In 2004 ARL adopted a Strategic Plan that identified priorities for the Association for the next five years.¹ The three strategic directions in the plan are:

- developing new models of scholarly communication;
- influencing information and other public policies that govern the way information is managed and made available;
- promoting and facilitating new and expanding roles for ARL libraries in the transformations affecting research, teaching, and learning.

How did the 2005-09 Plan change the Association?

New Committee Structure Integrated into the Board & Comprehensive Program Review

A new committee structure provided guidance for pursuing the strategic directions. Key to the new structure was establishment of three steering committees, each with responsibility for providing advice on one of the Plan's strategic directions, with chairs serving as ex-officio members of the ARL Board.

The steering committees have engaged a broader range of member expertise in the planning and decision-making activities of the Association. Similarly, the new structure of committees, task forces, and working groups has provided ARL programs with access to a broader range of expertise among member directors as well as other staff at ARL libraries, while offering member directors new opportunities for deep engagement with the planning and development of ARL programs. The new structure has also enabled rapid response to emerging issues.

Working with steering committee chairs, the Board reviewed all ARL programs and undertook a multiyear process of reallocating dues to match the goals of the new Plan. During this review, some programs were confirmed as a match to the

¹“ARL Strategic Plan 2005-2009,” *ARL: A Bimonthly Report*, no. 238/239 (February/April 2005): 1-12, http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/br/br238_239/.

new Plan while others were refocused, downsized, or eliminated.² A new program—Research, Teaching & Learning (RTL)—was established.

New Budget Framework with Reallocated Dues & Agility Fund

During the review and dues-reallocation process, the budget framework was revised to reflect the new Plan and an agility fund was established. The agility fund is a budgetary device used by the ARL Executive Director to support ad hoc activities identified as priorities by the ARL committees and Board. The fund supports short-term assignments by Visiting Program Officers or consultants addressing priority issues, for example: new ways of measuring collections, e-science, special collections, copyright education, and new models of scholarly communication.

Overall, the Board reallocated roughly 12.6% (\$350,000) of ARL dues within the annual budget to increase support for ARL's new strategic directions. Most of the reallocation (\$211,000) was used to establish the agility fund and the remainder (\$139,000) was used to increase the operational budget of strategic direction programs and the capabilities that enable those programs to pursue their agendas.

This shift in dues allocations can be seen in the following actions taken by the Association:

- improved funding for the strategic directions;
- increased reliance on cost recovery and/or grants for diversity and other leadership initiatives as well as for the overall RTL agenda;
- reduced ARL dues-supported staff by 3 positions (13.6% of total FTE employed by ARL).

² The Statistics and Measurement program and the Diversity Initiatives were both recognized as enabling capabilities providing support for all three strategic directions. The **Office of Leadership and Management Services** and the **Online Lyceum** were eliminated and the scope of ARL's leadership development activities narrowed and interwoven into all strategic directions. Likewise, **Preservation** activities were narrowed and folded into the Office of Scholarly Communication although they too surface within the work of all strategic directions.

ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD ARL'S PREFERRED FUTURE

The following list of desired characteristics [highlighted in bold] was identified in a "preferred future" planning exercise conducted during an ARL member retreat in July 2004. Participants in the planning exercise discussed "What could and should ARL look like in 2012?" The year 2012 was used as a not-too-distant horizon that extended beyond the timeframe of the 2005-09 Plan.

Each item in the list is annotated to show indicators of success or progress toward the preferred future, as of the fall of 2008.

What could and should ARL look like in 2012?

- 1. In 2012, ARL will have a strong focus on policy matters. It will be a primary advocate for the educational and research interests in the formulation of information and other public policies that have an impact on research libraries and systems of scholarly communication. It will provide leadership in advocacy and educational efforts to inform institutional policies and individual practices that influence research, teaching, and learning. With a high profile on policy issues, ARL will be an organization to which the media turns.**

Indicators of success:

- With ALA, ensured library interests in review of Section 108 of the Copyright Act.
- With SPARC, advocated for NIH Public Access Policy and provided leadership in campus implementation of the new policy.
- Highlighted issues surrounding digital course content and facilitated communication among university legal counsel faced with challenges to e-resource policies and practices.
- Promoted and advocated for orphan-works legislation.
- Promoted change in the US GPO Federal Depository Library Program.
- Promoted copyright education through Know Your Copy Rights initiative—published a brochure for teaching faculty and a Web site for librarians (CARL adapted both for Canadian law).
- Strengthened ARL's contribution to CARL's Federal Relations Initiative.
- ARL representatives (elected officers and staff) are regularly turned to as experts and their comments appear widely in news reports.
- Established a working relationship with the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that now assigns a beat reporter to ARL.

2. **In 2012, ARL will provide leadership in the transformation of scholarly communication. ARL will support and facilitate the emergence of economically sustainable channels where content is openly available to the scholarly and scientific communities along with associated services that maximize enduring discovery and interdisciplinary use of the content.**

Indicators of success:

- a. ARL is a leader, with AAU, CNI, and NASULGC , in issuing a “call to action” for research institutions to develop new institutional policies that support dissemination of research by retaining for research institutions the rights they need to disseminate works created by faculty and researchers.
- b. Strengthened understanding of the emerging new forms of scholarly works and effectively applied this understanding to policy and service development through the ARL New Model Publication Study and related work.
- c. Highlighted library publishing services, which are increasingly recognized as a common function of research libraries within the ARL community and beyond.
- d. Supported evolving norms for licensing content that concentrate negotiations with publishers and content providers on high-cost, high-risk situations and rely on best-practices approaches—such as the NISO, Best Practices for Shared E-Resource Understanding (SERU)— for smaller scale e-resource transactions.
- e. Strengthened libraries’ negotiations of digitization—or for other business exploitations of library collections—with a clearer understanding of key issues and community norms.
- f. Research libraries have invested in scholarly communication programs with strong outreach capabilities and effective services. The ARL/ ACRL Institute on Scholarly Communication assists with the development of these programs by promoting successful practices and encouraging program planning that integrates local needs with systemic trends. To date, 52 ARL libraries have sent teams to one of the Institutes.
- g. Prepared and positioned research libraries to promote campus implementation of new policies affecting the dissemination of research results with such resources as the NIH Public Access Policy Implementation guide and webcast.
- h. Informed federal and state regulatory agencies of common publisher bundling practices and solicited the agencies to undertake appropriate action. Fully explored additional legal strategies. Analyzed licensing terms of major commercial publishers and shared data with the membership to assist in their negotiations.

3. **In 2012, ARL's influence will be global in scope with powerful national, North American, and international collaborations. It will take a leadership role in framing key policy issues and seek allies with shared goals to advance a policy position.**

Indicators of success:

- a. Strengthened ARL contribution to CARL's Federal Relations Initiatives.
- b. Through Special Collections Working Group, SPARC, CNI, LibQUAL+, and other library assessment activities, ARL extends its reach and influence to international players.
- c. ARL representatives serve on IFLA committees, including the Management of Library Associations Section.
- d. Developing relationships with RLUK, LIBER, and leadership of Mexican research libraries.
- e. With CARL, delivered programs on International Dimensions of Digital Science and Scholarship (Membership Meeting theme, May 2006).

4. **In 2012, ARL will have an expanded focus on library contributions to the research process as well as to teaching and learning.**

Indicators of success:

- a. Surveyed members re noteworthy teaching, learning, and space innovations (results shared in presentations, written summary in progress).
- b. Developed agenda re research library roles in support of e-science; educational programs are underway.
- c. Re-framing discussions of special collections to include distinctive material of all ages and media, and attendant library services.
- d. Membership Meeting programs examined Libraries & the Research Process: Exploring How to Demonstrate Returns on Investment (May 2007) and Institutional Strategies Supporting E-Scholarship & Multidisciplinary Research (May 2008).
- e. With CNI, Fall Forums examined Enhancing Graduate Education: A Fresh Look at Library Engagement (October 2007) and Reinventing Science Librarianship: Models for the Future (October 2008).

5. By articulating directions, showcasing demonstrations, and developing assessment strategies, ARL will have enabled research libraries to expand their contributions and visibility.

Indicators of success:

- a. ARL's *Bimonthly Report* included articles on strategic issues, for example, the changing environment for university publishing, the reshaping of the research library workforce, library-faculty partnerships, library engagement of graduate education, and the outlook for e-only journal publishing.
- b. Membership Meetings and Fall Forums featured speakers and discussion forums that inform members and facilitate their engagement with strategic directions.
- c. Recruited diverse professionals for careers in research libraries: 89 stipends awarded for MLS graduate study in last 6 years and new Career Enhancement Program launched to support 45 fellowships in ARL libraries for diverse MLS students.
- d. Leadership and Career Development Program curriculum realigned to match strategic directions—20 participants in 2007–08.
- e. Library Investment Index developed and featured in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- f. Pilot testing underway of "ARL Library Profile"—a rich narrative demonstrating the contribution of research libraries to the core institutional mission.
- g. With UVa and UW, co-sponsored two Library Assessment Conferences, attracting 220 participants in 2006 (Charlottesville) and 375 participants in 2008 (Seattle), increasing participation and collaboration both nationally and internationally.
- h. With SCONUL and other international library associations, exploring best practices and benchmarking in library assessment.
- i. LibQUAL+ surveys reached 1 million users in over 1,000 institutions in 17 countries over past nine years, allowing libraries to track and stay abreast of user expectations and perceptions.
- j. Delivered presentations and workshops on Evaluating Physical and Virtual Space to Support Teaching and Learning, and on Enhancing Assessment and Data Management Skills.
- k. Defined, measured, and benchmarked digital library operations through effective assessment methods (DigiQUAL).

6. **In 2012, ARL's leadership and governance will reflect the diversity of its member libraries' interests, demonstrate agility by responding to the changing needs of its member libraries, and provide multiple opportunities to engage member representatives as well as library staff beyond the library director's position.**

Indicators of success:

- a. Diversity of member library interests is reflected in Board composition.
- b. Agility fund established and successfully deployed to support priorities identified by committees.
- c. New committee structure enables the membership to come together and address an array of distinct issues via the formation of short-term task forces as well as longer-term working groups.
- d. 75% of ARL member representatives have served on one or more ARL committees or working groups in 2008.
- e. Library staff beyond directors are involved in not quite half of ARL committees or working groups (other than governance or steering committees).
- f. The community's interest in succession planning is supported by the Research Library Leadership Fellows (RLLF) executive leadership program. To date, two cohorts have involved 42 RLLF Fellows and 5 are now serving as academic library directors.
- g. RLLF Fellows are engaged in programmatic interests of the Association and involved in committee work and Membership Meeting program content.
- h. The Fall Forums held after the October Membership Meetings have proven to be an effective way of involving staff from ARL libraries as well as ARL directors in programming around the strategic directions.

7. **In 2012, ARL's member representatives will be active in and supportive of the organization and recognize its value to the field. Affinity groups will allow member representatives to congregate around common interests.**

Indicators of success:

- a. Member representatives congregate around common interests in self-funded initiatives (e.g., ClimateQUAL, MINES, RLLF, etc.), in ARL working subgroups (e.g., Regional Federal Depository Libraries Working Group, Special Collections Working Group, etc.), and occasionally convene in ad hoc groups in conjunction with ARL Membership Meetings.
- b. Member representatives develop topics of interest into programs and lead discussions for plenary and concurrent sessions at Membership Meetings and Fall Forums.
- c. Participation of member libraries in Membership Meetings continues to be good, ranging from 85% to 90% percent attendance. Meetings have received positive evaluations from participants, ranging from 8 to 9.5 on a 10-point scale.

8. **In 2012, ARL will have rationalized its relationship with the other organizations in the research library community, reducing redundancy and creating a dynamic, collaborative environment that will be able to serve the diverse needs of research libraries.**

Indicators of success:

- a. ARL has convened two meetings (and scheduled a third meeting) of the Allied Organization Group (executive directors of ARL, CLIR, CNI, CRL, DLF, Ithaka, OCLC/RLG, SPARC) to facilitate sharing of agendas and identify opportunities to avoid redundancy.
- b. Examples of collaboration are noted throughout this summary.

9. **In 2012, ARL's mission will be sharply focused, and the initiatives it funds and undertakes will avoid "mission creep."**

See item 10, below.

10. In 2012, ARL will be fiscally stable and strong, with appropriate financial and human resources—both member representatives and staff—to support its work.

Indicators of success:

- a. Implementation of the plan has taken full advantage of the several funding strategies described by the Task Force on Future Financial Strategies for ARL (membership dues, voluntary contributions, grants, or some combination). ARL has also sought and received support from and collaborated with parallel organizations CNI and SPARC and other entities that share research library goals and attract membership and funding from beyond ARL.
- b. Board recommendations for dues and a financial strategy for 2009 seek to strengthen budgetary support for the strategic directions identified in the Plan, in particular, to increase funding for the new Research, Teaching & Learning program.
- c. The Board expects the Reserve Fund to reach the ARL goal (30% of the operating budget) by 2012.

11. In 2012, ARL will have strategic planning and organizational assessment as core Association competencies.

Indicators of success:

- a. Program assessment is the focus of the Board's annual planning meeting each February; the Strategic Plan sets date-specific targets for membership-wide reviews of the Plan.
- b. The Board plans a review and update of the Strategic Plan to take place during the coming year.
- c. Each strategic direction steering committee, as well as the Statistics & Assessment Committee, periodically conducts a review of its agenda to identify priorities. In addition, the Scholarly Communication and Public Policies Steering Committees have twice come together to review and update ARL's action agenda regarding intellectual property issues.

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