



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES



Association of College
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A Division of the American Library Association

Institute on Scholarly Communication

Report on Applications to the Institute on Scholarly Communication and the Selection Process

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Background on the applicant pool

Applications have been very competitive for both offerings of the Institute to date. The inaugural offering of the Institute attracted applications from 77 institutions on behalf of 190 participants. All of the available seats (100) were assigned and slots for 34 individuals were added to a waiting list. For the second offering of the Institute all wait listed institutions were offered seats without re-review resulting in 77 unassigned seats for which 55 institutions applied on behalf of 127 individuals. For both Institute offerings, applicants came from across the US and Canada and included institutions from outside this region. Institutions of all sizes applied. Applications came from liberal arts colleges, mid-size masters degree granting institutions, a range of PhD granting institutions, and professional schools focusing on law or medicine. The majority of applications were for team attendance.

Criteria posted in the Institute's FAQ prior to the review.

“Applicants will be selected on a competitive basis.... There will not be a rolling review; instead, all applicants will be reviewed at once. Reviewers will seek to create a group representing a wide range of institutions. Other criteria that will be considered will be evidence of applicant readiness, evidence of institutional support for a library-led scholarly communication program, and geographic diversity.”

Posted at <http://www.arl.org/training/institutes/arl-acrl06faq.html>

About the Selection Committee

Reviews of applications were conducted independently of ARL/ACRL staff member and Institute faculty or planning group involvement. The Selection Committee was comprised of eight peer reviewers for the July Institute and ten peer reviewers for the December Institute. Seven peer reviewers participated in both review processes. Reviewers were chosen for their extensive knowledge of scholarly communications issues, national visibility, and experience working on these issues at their campuses. The selection committee for the second review included two participants in the July offering of the Institute. Committee members came from various parts of North America and represented a range of institutional types (public and private institutions, liberal arts and PhD granting institutions, ARL and non-ARL members). The Selection Committee used the criteria posted in conducting their reviews. A primary and secondary reviewer read each application and the entire team reviewed final recommendations. The selection committee organized a subgroup for reviewing masters granting and baccalaureate institutions and another to review PhD granting institutions to make it easier to compare comparable institutions. The two pools were brought together in a final review of applicants.

General demographics of the participants selected

Accepted applicants came from the US, Canada, and two other countries. The Selection Committee did not find it necessary to apply geographic criteria to achieve balanced representation among the applications although the Committee monitored this closely. Both individual and team applications were selected. Liberal arts and masters level institutions had a higher success rate than PhD granting institutions. Among PhD granting institutions both ARL members and non-ARL members were accepted. The demographics of both applications and acceptances were quite similar between the two review processes.

Indicators of success

Naturally applicants to future Institutes seek information on what made applications successful in the highly competitive pools for the 2006 Institutes. Because the processes were competitive - with success being defined in relation to the pool of applicants, it is impossible to offer an objective “yardstick” which will guarantee success in future application pools. Many institutions not accepted had strong applications, just not applications as strong as others in the pool.

A few generalizations may be possible nevertheless. The observations offered below describe characteristics that were common but not universally present in all applications. For both 2006 pools, the main criteria that proved significant in differentiating among institutions related to “evidence of applicant readiness” and “evidence of institutional support for a library-led scholarly communication program.” Institution type and geographic diversity were monitored but it did not prove necessary to take extraordinary measures to incorporate these into the review process.

In relation to the two criteria of readiness and institutional support, some indicators were common although never universal among the successful applications. Successful institutions’ applications often

- demonstrated in their goal statements a working knowledge of current scholarly communication issues. Often some initial efforts at outreach, however modest, were described.
- indicated clearly each applicant’s organization role and articulated their relevance to the planned scholarly communication program. Institutions seeking “blank” slots for positions that were not currently filled were less competitive than those with all team members on board.
- clearly articulated what issues they were considering addressing, offered some context for why these were of interest, and conveyed the sense of having a basic understanding of the issues informing their goals. Successful applicants provided more than just three bald goal statements of a few words each.
- offered goals suggesting the intention to develop a multifaceted program with multiple focuses or covering a range of issues. (e.g. Institutions describing a plan that included institutional repository development as part of an outreach program fared better than those focusing exclusively on institutional repository development). There was not a subset of “attractive” goals, but successful applicants provided evidence that a thoughtful development around a few key issues was planned.
- included a faculty member or senior administrator, if a team application was made. Many team compositions were accepted but involvement of stakeholders from outside the library was a plus.
- showed evidence of support for addressing scholarly communication issues within the library and more broadly on campus. Support based administratively above the library (e.g. support from the Provost) was seen as particularly compelling.