Procedures for Membership in the Association of Research Libraries

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I. Qualifications for Membership

Membership in the Association is by invitation upon the recommendation of the Board of Directors and approval of the membership. Candidates for membership must meet the qualifications as established by vote of the membership. The criteria for ARL membership derive from efforts to define a universe of similar institutions that share a commitment to providing the materials and services needed for serious study and research.

1. University Libraries
   The Bylaws of the Association specify that membership shall be by invitation "to major university libraries whose collections and services are broadly based" and define such libraries as "those whose parent institutions broadly emphasize research and graduate instruction at the doctoral level and grant their own degrees, which support large, comprehensive research collections on a permanent basis, and which give evidence of an institutional capacity for and commitment to the advancement and transmittal of knowledge." The criteria for university library members consist of three parts: the first to ensure a similarity of parent institutional characteristics with the current membership; the second to ensure comparability of size; and the third to ensure diversity and significant contribution to the distributed North American collection of research resources.

   o Similarity of Parent Institutions

      The first part of the university library criteria is designed to ensure that university libraries being considered for membership in ARL contribute to the effective interchange of information among research libraries having common characteristics. This assumes broad, interdisciplinary library collections in all media and
programs in support of research and graduate education. To meet this criterion, at the time the library is invited for membership its parent institution must be classified as a Research University (high or very high research activity) as reflected in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2010 revision) published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Canadian institutions may supply similar data or comparable affiliations.

Institutional permanence and commitment also must be demonstrated. Therefore, in the case of institutional mergers, a library cannot be considered for membership until it has operated for at least four years under the administration of a single director.

- **Similarity of Size**

  The second part of the university library criteria is statistical indicators to assess similarity of size. Through the use of the statistical technique known as factor analysis of categories of data collected annually from each ARL member, several have been identified that describe those characteristics the ARL members hold most in common:
  
  - number of volumes held
  - number of volumes added, gross
  - number of current serial titles received
  - total library expenditures
  - total library material expenditures
  - number of professional plus support staff
  - total salaries and wages of professional staff

  The method of comparison are index scores derived by the variant of factor analysis called principal component analysis. For further information, refer to the ARL Library Investment Index. These quantitative measures are used as benchmarks to determine whether a more detailed assessment of library qualifications should begin.

- **Significant contributions to the distributed North American collection of research resources**

  The candidate library must furnish strong evidence that it makes a significant contribution to the distributed North American collection of research resources in media of all types. The strength of evidence and the nature of contribution to the distributed North American collection of research resources will be taken into consideration in conjunction with the library’s index scores. Factors
to consider here are enumerated in the ARL Principles of Membership.

The appendices outline required documentation and statistics.

2. Nonuniversity Libraries

Although ARL is primarily an association of academic libraries, the ARL Bylaws indicate that in addition to major university libraries, membership in the Association is open to "other libraries whose collections are recognized as having national significance." Such libraries are those research libraries not affiliated with degree granting institutions, but that may be affiliated with government agencies, federal, state, or local associations committed to research, or that may be nonaligned, governed by their own boards of directors, trustees, etc. To be eligible for membership, such libraries must share the same research and service mission as the university library members of the ARL.

In evaluating potential candidates, the Membership Committee will be concerned particularly with the research and scholarly mission (role and scope) defined for a library by its governing body, the commitment of support by the governing body, and evidences of the accomplishment of these missions. Emphasis will be placed on the criteria listed in the ARL Principles of Membership. Important consideration will be given to how an institution could contribute to the goals and objectives of ARL.

Nonuniversity research libraries will be evaluated on the qualitative elements of their operations and collections as well as on quantitative elements in accordance with the following guidelines. The appendices outline required documentation and statistics.

- Collections

Collections must be generally recognized as a major scholarly resource of national importance, as evidenced by listing in national directories and guides and citations in published research. While the collections need not be as broadly based as those of a general university library, they must represent a reasonably broad spectrum of disciplines. The collections should be sufficient in size to correspond to the comprehensiveness and depth required to support doctoral programs. In addition, there must be an acquisitions program at a level to at least maintain the currency of the library’s collections.

The following basic level is suggested: collection size of 1,000,000 cataloged volumes with a low ratio of duplication of titles.
Acquisitions

The major characteristics of university library acquisitions should be reflected in nonuniversity library acquisitions. First is the relatively large number of monographs acquired each year and second is the emphasis on serial publications. In addition, a significant percentage of these acquisitions are in foreign languages. University libraries also collect significantly in non-print media and provide extensive access to electronic resources. These characteristics in turn have a heavy impact on university library ordering and cataloging procedures.

Staff

The staff should be large enough and well trained enough, with an appropriate ratio of professional to nonprofessional staff, and with the subject and language expertise required to provide adequate bibliographic control and interpretation of the collections to scholars and researchers.

Resource Sharing

There should be evidence of active participation in programs of resource sharing of all types as may be demonstrated in:

- services to the library and scholarly community, including the availability of electronic resources, and the creation of bibliographic records and their availability on one of the major bibliographic networks;
- participation in regional and national consortia, networks, etc.;
- participation in interlibrary loan activities for appropriate materials;
- public access to collections for all qualified users;
- effective and innovative use of technology

Use of Collections

There should be evidence that scholars are using the collection and that the institution is of service to a community of scholars and researchers, as exhibited by records of circulation and interlibrary loans, fellowships, publications, and exhibits.
II. Procedures for Consideration of New Members

The following procedures will be applied to both university and nonuniversity libraries expressing an interest in ARL membership:

1. The ARL staff contact to the ARL Membership Committee will respond to membership queries by supplying or referring inquirers to the ARL Principles of Membership and the Procedures for Membership in the Association of Research Libraries and answering general questions. The initial data to be submitted by an institution considering membership include:
   - The institutional classification as reflected by the most current edition of the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, if the institution is a US academic institution. Canadian institutions can supply comparable information.
   - Statistics for the most recent four years in the categories that comprise ARL indices.

An institution should confer with ARL staff about other documentation options if either the Carnegie Classification or the basic statistics are not applicable to their institution.

This initial approach is handled on an informal or ad hoc basis, at no cost to the institution, and with no obligation on the part of either ARL or the institution expressing interest in membership. All inquiries will be kept confidential.

2. If after this initial discussion an institution wishes to proceed further with a view to formal candidacy, it should submit a formal letter expressing interest in ARL membership to the ARL Executive Director. The letter, written by either the Library Director or a senior officer of the institution, should indicate briefly how the institution believes it meets the ARL Principles of Membership. The ARL Executive Director will acknowledge the letter and place it on the next agenda of the ARL Board's Executive Committee for referral to the Membership Committee and to report to the Board. This referral does not appear in the Board minutes and the institution’s confidentiality is maintained.

3. On receipt of the letter expressing interest in ARL membership, the Membership Committee will review the letter to determine if one of its number be appointed as a representative of the committee to arrange an informal visit to the institution of one to two days to see the library first hand. The representative also will review with the ARL staff contact the basic documentation about the library, including statistics for the most recent four years, and to give particular attention to any apparent inconsistencies in the data. During the visit, the representative will
provide initial feedback to the Library Director regarding his or her perception of the state of readiness of the library for membership in the context of the Principles of Membership. The representative will report on the visit to the full Membership Committee.

4. On the appointment of a Membership Committee representative, the institution shall pay to the Association a non-refundable fee, as determined from time to time by the Board of the Association. The purpose of this fee is to cover the administrative expenses incurred by the preparation for the visit. The institution shall be responsible for all travel costs for the Membership Committee representative.

5. Following the visit by and feedback from the committee representative, the institution shall decide when or if it wishes to proceed to formal candidacy for membership and shall formally communicate this decision in writing to the Executive Director of the Association. In the event that such a letter is not received by ARL, it will be assumed that the institution has decided not to pursue further its interest in membership.

It is emphasized that the role of the committee representative is to discuss the benefits and obligations of membership and assist the potential candidate library in arriving at its decision whether and/or when to proceed with formal candidacy. At this stage, there is no obligation or commitment of any kind by either ARL or the prospective candidate library. The decision to extend an invitation to membership to any institution is the exclusive responsibility of the entire membership of the Association, on the recommendation of its Board of Directors. Any opinions or observations given by the committee representative to the library do not constitute an opinion or position of the Association, and the representative does not have the authority to make a commitment of any kind on behalf of the Association.

6. If the interested institution indicates that it wishes to proceed to formal candidacy, several members of the Membership Committee are constituted to become a Visiting Subcommittee specific to each candidate library. The Subcommittee generally consists of three persons, including if possible, someone who has served on a previous Visiting Subcommittee and someone who has experience in a similar type of library. One of the members of the Subcommittee shall be identified as its chair. The representative who initially visited the library may serve on the Visiting Subcommittee, but shall not act as its Chair. An alternate member is also designated should scheduling problems prevent one of the Visiting Subcommittee members from participating in the review visit. The alternate is kept apprised of the schedule for the visit. The establishment of the Visiting Subcommittee is reported to the ARL Board and appears in the Board minutes, making information about the candidacy public to the ARL membership.
7. The candidate library shall be responsible for all costs incurred by the Visiting Subcommittee, and will discuss the options for paying these expenses with the ARL staff contact.

8. The candidate library prepares documentation for the Visiting Subcommittee (as described in Appendix A) and submits it to the ARL staff contact for redistribution to the Visiting Subcommittee.

9. After reviewing the narrative and statistical documentation from the candidate library, the Chair of the Visiting Subcommittee establishes an agenda for a site visit in consultation with the Library Director. The Visiting Subcommittee submits a written report for the full Membership Committee that addresses points in the ARL Principles of Membership and makes a recommendation for action. The recommendation may be positive, negative, or include the possibility of a deferral that would provide the candidate library with information about what is needed for consideration by the full Membership Committee. The Membership Committee reviews the recommendation and forwards it as well as its own recommendation to the ARL Board.

10. The ARL Board of Directors reviews the report of the Visiting Subcommittee and the recommendation of the Membership Committee, seeking additional information or clarification if needed. If they concur with a positive recommendation, the Board prepares a recommendation for membership action at the next ARL Membership business meeting regarding extending an invitation to the candidate library to join the Association.

11. The ARL Membership acts on the recommendation of the Board.

12. The ARL Executive Director and the ARL President inform the candidate library of the Board and Membership action.

13. Distribution of Reports

A Visiting Subcommittee report with a positive recommendation from the Membership Committee that is supported by the ARL Board will be sent to the library under the signature of the ARL Executive Director and the ARL President. The report will also be distributed to the full membership as part of the business meeting documents in preparation for a vote. The report will be made available on request from the ARL office.

A Visiting Subcommittee report with a positive recommendation from the Membership Committee that is not supported by the ARL Board will be considered an administrative document. It will be sent as a confidential document under the signature of the ARL Executive Director and the ARL president only to the candidate library and include information to the
library about what further efforts need to be made in order to reposition themselves for reconsideration of membership.

A Visiting Subcommittee report with a negative recommendation from the Membership Committee is an administrative document that is forwarded to the Board for information and will not be distributed outside of the Board and the Membership Committee. The report will be sent to the candidate library as a confidential document in order that they may reposition themselves for review at a later date.

14. Request for Reconsideration

A candidate library that has been previously visited and recommended to reposition itself before reconsideration of membership can ask for a re-examination if the following conditions are met:

- The institution provides evidence of a sustained focus on research and the library demonstrates its support of the institution’s research agenda;
- The candidate library responds to any deficiencies identified in reports from previous visits made by representatives of ARL;
- The candidate library data meets currently established criteria;
- Enough time has elapsed to provide evidence of sustainability of resources.

A typical time for review is at least a minimum of 3 years. The candidate library requesting reconsideration will be added into the current queue.

III. Membership Obligations

Libraries that are members of the Association are expected to meet the following membership requirements.

1. Members must contribute the data necessary to establish the membership indices and to compile the annual ARL Statistics.
2. Members are expected to be represented at meetings of the Association by the library director.
3. Members must pay all dues and assessments voted by the membership. New members will be assessed a one-time strategic reserve fund contribution that is equal to the current equity amount of current members.
4. Members are expected to participate in the affairs of the Association.
IV. Procedures for Membership Review

As stated in the ARL Principles of Membership, where there appears to be a significant and sustained disparity between the accomplishments of a member institution and the principles of membership; or when a member institution does not meet its obligations; an in-depth review may be initiated. The ARL Executive Committee will recommend a course of action and the ARL Board will determine the criteria to be used for the review and the procedures to be followed. The final decision to remove a member will be determined by a vote of the ARL Membership at a membership business meeting.

Adopted by ARL Membership October 18, 2001

Appendix A: Documentation

In preparation for the Visiting Subcommittee, the applicant library is requested to submit a narrative description of approximately 10 pages that addresses all of the ARL Membership Principles, supplemented by other documentation addressing the points below if needed:

1. Collections

A commentary on the significance of collections of all media in the institution and their contribution to higher education and research, in particular the nature and scope of research collections and those supporting research efforts similar to doctoral research programs. The committee will consider such questions as:

   o The scope of collections and level of comprehensiveness, as compared to other ARL member libraries and to standardized collection development tools
   o The distinctive research-oriented collections of national significance
   o The library’s commitment to developing and maintaining collections, e.g., policy on providing cataloging and user assistance to gift collections, established preservation programs, etc.
   o The nature of the information services in support of research and graduate education
   o The role of the library in providing leadership within the research community on matters relating to scholarly communication
   o The library’s demonstrated interest in national library issues, such as preservation and information policy

2. Data submitted to surveys such as ACRL, CARL, NCES-IPEDS for the same four years (if possible) as submitted to ARL.

3. Examples of recent federal or foundation grant applications, if relevant to demonstrating the characteristics outlined in the ARL Membership Principles.

4. Additional relevant documentation, which might include:
   o Annual reports and statistics
   o Exhibit guides
   o Staff organization charts
   o Guides to collections
   o Journals and other publications sponsored by the library
   o Conference papers sponsored by the library
   o Monographs to which the collection made a sizeable contribution
   o Current planning documents, such as a five-year plan
   o Outside evaluations or consulting reports prepared in the last five years
Appendix B: Statistics Form

Reporting Library:

Contact person:

Title:

Telephone:

Email:

Date returned to ARL:

The latest Carnegie Classification for the parent university as published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (if US institution):

Report data for the last five years. See annual editions of the ARL Statistics for instructions on reporting data in each category:

- Number of volumes held:
- Number of volumes added (gross):
- Number of current serials received:
- Total expenditures:
- Total library materials expenditures:
- Number of professionals plus support staff:
- Salaries and wages of professional staff:

* Please supply expenditure figures in US dollars. (The conversion rates in Canadian dollars to one US dollar are:

2007-2008: 1.0101
2008-2009: 1.1667
2009-2010:
2010-2011:

(Divide Canadian dollar amounts by the rate given for each year to determine US dollar amounts.)

Send data to: Julia Blixrud, Assistant Executive Director, at jblix@arl.org