ARL Membership Reviews:
Process, Responsibilities, and Procedures

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Applicant Libraries may be considered for membership by initiating requests to the ARL Executive Director or as a result of responding to inquiries of interest from the ARL Membership Committee. Membership in the Association for Research Libraries (ARL) is by invitation upon the recommendation of the Board of Directors and approval of the Membership.

A. Qualifications for ARL Membership

Consideration for ARL membership is based upon an institution's demonstrated commitment to and achievements in research, commitment to and investment in its library, and upon the *Principles of Membership in the Association of Research Libraries*. For consideration of requests for membership by non-university libraries, the principles are framed by the nature of the library/institution, its national scope/impact, and its governing body.

B. ARL Membership Committee

The ARL Membership Committee is a sub-committee of the ARL Board of Directors and reports to the ARL Board. Its structure and membership are specified by the ARL Bylaws, Article II, Membership, Section 9, Membership Committee.

C. ARL Staff Lead

The ARL Staff Lead to the Membership Committee provides support for the ARL Membership Committee and visiting site teams, works closely with the Committee Chair, informs the Membership Committee of the status of all membership inquiries, and maintains current and historical membership documentation. The Executive Director or Staff Lead typically serves as the initial point of contact for potential and current Applicant Libraries interested in applying for ARL membership.

2. Procedures for Informal and Formal Reviews of Membership Applications

A. Phase One—Initial Contacts with Applicant Libraries

Applicant Library Directors may contact the ARL Executive Director and/or Membership Committee Staff Lead about the process and procedures for ARL membership consideration. The Executive Director or Staff Lead responds to membership queries by answering general questions and/or supplying or referring inquirers to the *Principles of Membership in the ARL* and the *ARL Membership Reviews: Process, Responsibilities, and Procedures* documents.

The Membership Committee may also identify and contact potential applicant libraries to gauge their interest in joining the Association.

In both of the scenarios described above, if the Applicant Library Director continues to be interested in membership, the Executive Director or Staff Lead will ask the Director to provide initial institution- and library-specific information and data as outlined in Appendix A, Phase One. At this exploratory stage, the process is informal and confidential. The applicant library incurs no fees from ARL for these preliminary reports.

Phase One information is reviewed by the Membership Committee. The Membership Committee will communicate its preliminary recommendations about the Library's potential for membership to the Executive Director and the Staff Lead.

The Executive Director or Staff Lead will handle all communication with the Applicant Library Director during Phase One. The Executive Director or Staff Lead will inform the Membership Committee about the status of all membership inquiries throughout the process.

B. Phase Two—Formal Letters of Interest

If the Applicant Library Director wishes to proceed further to Phase Two, they will submit formal letters of interest to the ARL Executive Director. The formal letters should indicate concisely how the institution believes it meets each of the points described in Appendix A, Phase Two.

Upon receipt of formal letters of interest from Applicant Library Director, the ARL Executive Director acknowledges the request and refers the application to the Membership Committee. The referral does not appear in formal minutes and is considered confidential during this phase.

The Membership Committee reviews all Phase One and Two information, as submitted. At this stage of review, the Membership Committee decides whether it will proceed or not proceed with further consideration of the application.

1) **No further consideration:** If the Committee determines that no further consideration will be undertaken, the Committee Chair informs the Applicant Library Director of its decision with any observations and conclusions the Committee may have for the Library. The letters to the Applicant Library Director convey the decision of the Committee by referencing the *Principles of Membership* and are not designed to provide specific expectations for what the Library would need to do to obtain ARL membership through subsequent membership requests.

2) **Further consideration:** If the Committee decides to proceed further with membership consideration, one of two next steps could occur:

   a) Initiation of informal site visit to assess the Committee's further interest in formal consideration (see Section C); or

   b) Initiation of formal membership site visit (see Section D).

If the Committee decides to proceed with either an informal or formal visit, the Executive Director or Staff Lead notifies the Applicant Library Director of the Committee's decisions and the Library's financial responsibilities. These financial obligations include a one-time, non-refundable administrative fee based on five hours each of support by the Staff Lead and an administrative assistant, and all travel costs for site visits, whether informal or formal. The Applicant Library Director notifies the Executive Director in writing if the informal or formal site visit should proceed.

If an informal visit is the next step, no further documentation is required of the Applicant Library at this stage. If a formal site visit is the next step, the Applicant Library will be notified to submit additional documentation (see Section D).

C. Phase Three—Informal Site Visits

The Membership Committee appoints a member to serve as its Informal Site Visit Representative. The Representative reviews with the Staff Lead the Library's documentation provided per Appendix A.

The Applicant Library Director and the Staff Lead arrange the informal site visit. During the visit, the Representative obtains as much information as possible regarding how the Library meets the *Principles of Membership* and may provide initial observations to the Applicant Library Director of what might be additional information of importance if there were to be a formal site visit. The Representative also describes the benefits and obligations of membership and the next steps in potential membership consideration.

The Representative writes a summary site visit report for the Membership Committee with observations on how the Applicant Library is/is not meeting the membership principles and recommends "no further action" or a "formal site visit."

Following the informal visit and review of the summary site visit report, the Membership Committee determines if it should initiate formal membership consideration.

1) **If the decision is "no further action,"** the Committee Chair notifies the Applicant Library Director in writing with reasons based on the *Principles of Membership*.

2) **If the decision is "yes, initiate a formal site visit,"** the Committee Chair contacts the Applicant Library Director of its decision to proceed and asks if the Library Director wishes to continue the process.

   a) **If the Applicant Library Director states "no**, **do not proceed**" the Staff Lead creates an archival electronic file of all documentation.

   b) **If the Applicant Library Director states "yes**, **proceed,"** the Committee initiates steps described in Section D below, and an electronic file of all documentation is created.

D. Phase Four—Formal Membership Site Visits

A formal membership site visit occurs if the Applicant Library would like to continue with a formal membership review based on a decision by the Membership Committee to do so.

1) Formal Membership Site Visit Team

The Formal Membership Site Visit Team consists of three members who can be members of the Committee or other directors as appropriate due to location or type of library. The chair of the visiting team is a member of the Membership Committee. An alternate team member is appointed and is kept apprised of the visit schedule.

Appointment consideration includes prior service on a site visit team and experience/knowledge as to the characteristics of the Library. The Informal Site Visit Representative may serve on the Site Visit Team but not as the Team Chair.

The Committee Chair reports the appointment of the site visit team to the ARL Board and it is included in the Board minutes, making information about the candidacy public to the ARL membership. The Applicant Library is informed of the members on the site visit team by the Staff Lead or the Executive Director.

2) Library Documentation

The Applicant Library prepares site visit documentation that will address its achievements and characteristics related to the ARL *Principles of Membership* and any updated Appendix A data, and will submit all information to the Staff Lead for distribution to and comment from the Site Visit Team, with at least six weeks of lead time. Prior to the visit, if the Site Visit Team wants additional documentation, data, and/or information, as well as additions or changes to the proposed site visit agenda, such requests are managed by the Staff Lead.

3) Site Visit Agenda and Logistics

The Applicant Library Director, Executive Director, and Staff Lead determine the site visit agenda and logistics in consultation with the Chair of the Site Visit Team. The agenda typically includes meetings with chief institutional administrators (e.g., President, Provost, Vice President for Research, Vice President for Undergraduate Education, Chief Information Officer, college and school deans, etc.) and undergraduate and graduate students.

The Site Visit Team members arrange their own transportation with subsequent reimbursement by the Applicant Library. The Applicant Library Director arranges necessary accommodations and any necessary local transportation.

4) Site Visit Team Report and Recommendations

Following the visit, the Site Visit Team submits a formal written report (based on the *Principles of Membership*) for the Membership Committee's consideration. The Team Chair may request further information and/or clarifications from the Applicant Library Director during the drafting of the Site Visit Team Report. The report concludes with the Team's recommendations for membership that may be positive, negative or include the possibility of deferral and would provide the Library with advice as to what would be needed for further consideration by the Membership Committee.

The Site Visit Team report outline includes:

a) Brief Introductory remarks including the report sections and background
b) Site Visit Team's Visit Description
c) University or Parent Institution Description
d) Library Description
e) Principles of Membership in ARL—Analysis and Conclusions
f) Visiting Team's Recommendation for ARL Membership

g) Appendices:
    i. ARL Membership Site Visit Team Schedule
    ii. University or Parent Institution Organizational Chart
    iii. Library Organizational Chart
    iv. ARL Investment Index Comparative Rankings with the Library (5 years)
    v. Other ARL comparative rankings data (5 years)
    vi. Other documentation, including information about the institution's research investment/expenditures, rankings, awards, etc.

E. Membership Committee Review and Actions After Formal Site Visit

The Membership Committee reviews the report and recommendation(s) of the Site Visit Team, and devises its final recommendation(s):

1) Supports Extending an Invitation for ARL Membership

Forwards the Site Team Report and its recommendation(s) and any further observations to the ARL Board for deliberation and action.

2) Does Not Support Extending an Invitation for ARL Membership

Forwards the Site Team Report and its recommendation with any further observations to the ARL Board for informational purposes only. The report is considered a confidential archival administrative document and is not distributed outside the Membership Committee and ARL Board. If the ARL Board does not refer the report back to the Committee for reconsideration, the Committee Chair notifies the Applicant Library Director in writing of the Committee decision not to recommend an invitation for membership. The notification includes a summary of the reasons and observations as to the decision based on the *ARL Principles of Membership*.

F. ARL Board of Directors Review and Actions

The ARL Board reviews the Site Visit Team report and recommendation(s), along with any further observations of the Membership Committee.

1) Requests for Additional Information, Clarification, or Reconsideration

If the Board wishes additional information, clarification, or reconsideration, the report is referred back to the Membership Committee before taking formal action. The Board takes formal membership action only if there is a positive recommendation from the Membership Committee.

2) Supports Extending an Invitation for ARL Membership

If the Board supports the Membership Committee's positive recommendation, the Board prepares a recommendation for membership action at the next ARL Membership Business meeting for extending an invitation to the Library to join the Association. The Site Visit Report and the Board's recommendation and rationale are provided to the Membership.

The Site Visit Report is sent to the Applicant Library under the signature of the ARL Executive Director and ARL Board President. The report is confidential to the ARL member representatives, and is only shared among members once it has been issued by the Board to the members.

3) Does Not Support Extending an Invitation for ARL Membership

If the Board does not support the Membership Committee's positive recommendation, the Site Visit Report is considered an archival administrative document. The ARL Executive Director and the ARL President formally notifies the Applicant Library Director in writing of the Board's decisions with the Board's reasons and observations as to its decision based on the *Principles of Membership*. The Site Visit Report is shared with the Applicant Library as a confidential document, not to be shared with anyone other than the Library Directors institutional supervisor(s).

G. ARL Membership Review and Actions

The Board prepares a recommendation for membership action with the Site Visit Report for the next ARL Membership Business Meeting.

At the next ARL membership Business Meeting, the Membership considers and takes formal action on the Board's recommendation to extend an invitation for Association membership. The ARL Executive Director informs the Applicant Library Director of the upcoming Membership Action with a copy of the Site Visit Report.

1) ARL Members Vote to Extend an Invitation for ARL Membership

The ARL Executive Director and ARL President extends a formal written invitation to the Library Director for the Library to become an ARL member. If the Library accepts the invitation, the ARL President notifies the ARL Membership, and the ARL Executive Director makes the public announcements.

The written invitation will include an invoice for the Library's contribution to the Board Designated Reserve Fund that is calculated by dividing the amount of the fund at the time of the membership vote by the current number of members in the Association and the dues for the year the Applicant Library will join the Association. If the Applicant Library joins ARL following the Spring Association Meeting, the Library will pay a pro-rated dues amount.

2) ARL Members Vote Not to Extend an Invitation for ARL Membership

The ARL Executive Director and ARL President formally notify the Library Director that the ARL Membership has decided not to extend an invitation for the Library to become an ARL member. They provide reasons and any insights for the decision that are based on the *Principles of Membership*.

H. Formal Requests for Reconsideration of Membership Applications

A Library that has previously undergone a membership review (including an informal or formal site visit) may request reconsideration. Such a request for reconsideration should be

made following a minimum of three years and is based on demonstrated progress in meeting the current *Principles for Membership*, responding to issues of concern that were raised with the previous review, and enough time to provide evidence of sustainability of resources.

3. Requests for Reinstatement of Membership

A former member of the Association that has voluntarily withdrawn may submit a request for membership renewal through a formal letter to the Executive Director outlining the reasons for membership reinstatement. The institution should also submit information as shown in Appendix A, both Phase One and Two, to establish that it meets current requirements and should document how it meets the *Principles of Membership*. At a minimum, a member of the Membership Committee or a designated representative should visit the institution to ensure that the *Principles of Membership* are fully met, and shall present a report to the Board. The financial obligation of the potential member for the visit includes a one-time, non-refundable administrative fee based on five hours each of support by the Staff Lead and an administrative assistant, and all travel costs. The Applicant Library Director notifies the Executive Director in writing if the informal or formal site visit should proceed.

The Board, following this process, shall prepare a recommendation on reinstatement for consideration by the ARL membership.

If the Library's forfeiture of membership occurred more than five years before the request for reinstatement of membership, the Library must undergo the full review process established for new membership applicants.

4. Procedures for Review of Current Members

Where there appears to be a significant and sustained disparity between the characteristics and accomplishments of a member institution and the *Principles of Membership*, an in-depth review of the current member may be requested by any member director. The ARL Executive Committee will recommend a course of action in response to the request and the procedures to be followed. The final decision to revoke membership will be determined by a vote of the ARL Membership at a membership business meeting, per the ARL Bylaws. Any member whose membership has been revoked will receive formal written notification from the Board. Membership dues will not be refunded due to termination of membership.

<div align="center">

Adopted by the Membership Committee October 2001
Revised November 2005
Revised May 2008
Revised October 2008
Revised October 2009
Revised November 2017
Revised September 30, 2019

</div>

ARL Membership Reviews:
Process, Responsibilities, and Procedures

Appendix A

Information Required for Informal Inquiries and Formal Letters of Interest

Phase One (Informal Expressions of Interest)

The following information and data should be gathered from library directors who seek to obtain an initial, informal review of their institutions' potential for membership in ARL. These data are considered as information points, and no single item will be used to automatically exclude an institution at this early stage. A composite of this data will determine advancement to Phase Two.

- Institution-specific Data*:
  - Current rankings, classifications, memberships (e.g., global, national, as appropriate)
  - Current university or parent institution organizational charts
  - Current university or parent institution strategic plans or priorities
  - University or parent institution research expenditures for the last five years and information about research rankings relevant to the university or parent institution (e.g., national, international, comparative, awards, trends, etc.).
  - Where applicable, University student enrollment (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) for the last five years

* Data from non-university libraries should include information and data that illustrates national and, where available, international significance.

- Library-specific Data:
  - ARL Investment Index data comparison (5 years)
  - Current Library organizational chart
  - Library strategic plans (current and most recent past)
  - External review of library (within last 5 years) if available

Phase Two Consideration (Formal Letters of Interest):

Library directors' formal letters of interest should address *briefly* the following points.

- Library representation on university or parent institution committees and partnerships in university or parent institution strategic priorities, in particular in relation to teaching, learning, research, diversity, and institution master planning
- Joint programs and services that support research
- Recent investments in broadening discoverability, representation and access to collections, including enhancing diversity, production of metadata, technology renewal, reducing barriers, etc.
- Statistical measures in use and diversity of information resources
- Support for library professional development, including staff competencies in strategic and emerging areas
- Support for digital scholarship and dissemination

- Teaching and consulting services
- Scholarly communications program and initiatives
- Participation in consortial partnerships
- Rare and unique holdings and areas of strength
- Preservation activities
- Investment in maintaining and renewing current technologies, infrastructure, and spaces
- Collaboration with organizations outside the library, including those outside the university or parent institution, that advance scholarship, education, and societal goals
- Commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion