

ACRL New England Chapter's Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 November 2020

Goal 1: Improve and Optimize Organizational Structure

Our organization is a non-profit, all volunteer board comprised of members with varying term lengths. Through feedback surveys from our members, as well as through discussions with the board, several issues have arisen with the current structure. Addressing these issues would strengthen our organization by creating realistic and sustainable volunteer opportunities, providing more effective communication and outreach, and allow us to reevaluate our mission.

Supporting Strategies:

1. Review the structure, membership and position cycling of the board

- a. Re-evaluate Vice President, President, Past President, and Past Past President positions for realistic workloads, time commitments, and successful transitions.

The VP currently works almost exclusively on conference planning but has little time to learn the job of the President, which makes for a difficult transition. The work involved in conference planning can make recruitment difficult for this position.

The President's role is to convene quarterly meetings, attend National Chapter meetings, and communicate with the members. Leadership expectations are not clear and the President could benefit from more preparation.

The Past President formally serves on the Nominating Committee and is traditionally expected to serve as consultant to the President and Chair of the Site Selection Committee (for annual conference).

The Past Past President serves as the Chair of the Nominating Committee. This means that a person in these roles serves for a four-year term. This long term can be discouraging to prospective leaders and also creates more of a closed system. On the other hand, they are in a good position, knowledge-wise, to head this. We need to either formalize this position obligation or change it.

- b. Investigate compensation opportunities for board positions

Currently all our board positions are voluntary, but the work involved with some positions makes them almost full-time jobs. Many other library organizations have paid administrative positions. Working with the

finance committee, we could investigate possible paid positions in the future (after COVID financial challenges).

c. Create onboarding procedures for new board members

New board members are voted in and announced during the final business meeting of the year, but many do not actually start their term until July 1, leaving a gap in the Board membership if decisions need to be made in the interim.

On-boarding takes place both on an individual level (getting email accounts and web access set up), and collectively (general orientation during a summer retreat) for all new members. We have identified information gaps and timing challenges that may benefit from a new/different model.

d. Create regular and consistent offboarding practices

Currently we do not have a consistent procedure for offboarding practices.

2. Review and evaluate all channels of internal and external communication

a. Assess current methods of board communication

The board meets quarterly with an additional summer retreat. Outside of meetings our main communication is through a Google group email. There may be alternative or other methods of communication that would be beneficial.

b. Assess communication with chapter membership

Our main communication with membership comes from targeted emails through a Google Group (News) with some information on our website. It is unclear if these means are sufficient in reaching our members and if there are additional opportunities for outreach.

c. Assess communication with SIG members and program attendees

Some SIGs have email lists, but many do not.

d. Investigate and pilot new technologies for workflow and communications optimization

We have used many of our current applications and technologies for several years without assessment.

3. Evaluate and update our [chapter's mission](#)

a. Review the communities we serve

We traditionally have served academic librarians and academic library staff in the New England region.

Librarians are the majority of our members and program participants.

Assessment has shown that there are issues with reaching librarians and library staff who are at community colleges or smaller institutions.

Library staff and library school students are rare in our membership and in program participation.

- b. Review and create procedures to promote diversity and inclusion
COVID-19 has made us aware that Zoom meetings have actually increased participation in both meetings and programs.

Virtual meetings may also help to keep program fees down, which also helps with inclusion.

- c. Review our main mission
Our mission statement was reviewed and updated four years ago, but current issues of equity and inclusion and reliance on virtual platforms due to COVID-19 are reasons for reassessment of our current situation and changing priorities.

This may also help to bring in more members and volunteers.

- d. Review our relationship with ACRL National
The relationship with our parent organization is not well known to even the board members.

Understand how our mission corresponds (or not) to National's mission.

The President (and VP) participate in Chapter's Council meetings, write annual reports, and contribute to the newsletter.

Goal 2: Strengthen Organizational Health

Making sure everyone is well informed at all times, particularly through transitions, is challenging for a large, all-volunteer organization whose board only meets officially four times a year. We have identified several areas in which to improve communication, both within the board and to our members.

Supporting Strategies:

1. Create more transparency within the organization

a. Increase frequency of communication with chapter membership

Currently we have two general mechanisms for communication with members: our website, which provides news and updates, and emails sent through our Google Group News/Jobs listservs. Emails tend to be bigger announcements such as conference updates, board nominations, SIG events, etc. It is unknown if this serves the members needs or if they would like more/different information.

b. Share how decisions are being made and discussions are being had

Most decisions are made during board meetings, which are not open to the public.

c. Create better understanding and transparency of what is involved with board participation

What is required of board members is not always known.

Better understanding could increase participation.

Last year's (2019) nomination process provided information to help prospective board members understand the work and decide if it is a good fit for them.

d. Investigate implementations of open board meeting

Many organizations have open board meetings or sections of the meeting open to the members, but we do not.

The logistical/practical side of implementation has not been discussed recently.

The members' interest in this is currently not known.

2. Prioritize documentation through better methods and procedures

a. Determine if meeting minutes should be publicly available

Our board meeting minutes are only distributed to the board.

Other members of the SIGs who are not chairs do not get the meeting minutes unless shared by the chairs.

The only minutes that are made available to members are those that get approved at the final meeting at the Annual Conference.

b. Draw attention to chapter manual and bylaws

Our manual and bylaws are located on our website and available to the public, but we do not actively publicize this.

Increased accessibility of and familiarity with these documents may allow members to better understand our organization.

c. Create sustainable records retention and management

We do not have a central location/repository for all organizational business.

Often chairs/leaders use their own Google accounts for their work and this is not always passed down to successors.

d. Establish sustainable support model for the Open Access Repository (OAR)

Currently we collaborate with UMass to host and publish our annual conference materials and some SIG presentations and posters on ScholarWorks.

This platform is a home for shareable public objects, but not appropriate for internal board documents.

3. Establish onboarding and continuity plans for board members

a. Reduce barriers and increase communication around the nomination process

Last year's (2019) nomination process did yield the largest slate of candidates in many years.

b. Strengthen continuity of SIG leadership

SIG leaders do not have a consistent process of shared documentation or procedures, which can make transition difficult.

c. Establish standardized onboarding checklist for SIGs

Onboarding starts shortly after many of the new board members are voted in and continues with the summer retreat for many members, but SIG leaders are appointed and depending on timing may miss this timeline.

4. Examine organization's culture for opportunities to manage change

- a. Create a culture that has an accessible knowledge base
Often, we rely heavily on members' institutional memory when deciding issues or understanding history.
- b. Foster flexibility and collaboration
2020 has taught us several lessons in flexibility and the importance of collaboration.
- c. Focus on change management
Successful transitions require careful attention and are even more important in an all-volunteer organization.
- d. Identify and break down barriers to participation in chapter leadership
Participation in chapter leadership is a great opportunity for everyone, but there is concern that everyone may not have the same chances for participation.

We often have more participants from large institutions, perhaps due to the fact that those institutions allow and encourage more time for professional development.

Our leaders often put in large amounts of time (on top of full-time jobs) to chapter work.

Running for office may seem to be about name recognition and/or popularity, which makes it difficult to bring in new leaders.

Goal 3: Improve Structure and Support for Programming

Our main mission is to provide accessible, affordable programming for our members through our SIGs, some committees (such as Leadership Development), and our annual conference. Programs require a large amount of time and effort, so we need to explore ways to better support our members with this work.

Supportive Strategies:

1. Invest in our special interest groups (SIGs)
 - a. Foster coordination between SIGs, with the chapter board, and with membership
Currently the SIGs work independently and sometimes collaborate, but not often.

We currently do not have a system or position that checks in with SIGs or offers support and those SIGs who are not active may be in jeopardy of being dissolved.

- b. Create a standard practices, policies, and programming protocols document
SIG structures vary widely depending on the group. Standardization may help members understand the expectations of membership. It could also help SIG leaders by having policies and practices already established.
 - c. Increase marketing and opportunities for raising awareness
Marketing of programs may be done through our listserv, our website, and social media apps, but these mainly target our members.
 - d. Support SIG leadership with standardized onboarding and offboarding processes
SIG leaders are appointed by the chapter president, but it may happen at different times of the year. Both onboarding and offboarding should have new processes in place to ensure smooth transitions.
 - e. Create opportunities for increased membership and member engagement
SIGs vary in their membership and service opportunities.
2. Focus on regional partnerships and collaborations
- a. Engage in outreach to peer and aspirant organizations such as New England Library Association, Boston Library Consortium, and state library associations
There are many library organizations in New England, and having stronger relationships with them will present us with potential collaborations and additional opportunities to offer original programming.
 - b. Explore ways to develop broader reach and impact
Collaborations with organizations may help us to reach a broader audience.
 - c. Pursue original programming, decreasing duplication and competition between organizations
Because there are so many programming options throughout New England, we have had the situation of offering a program that another organization has already done.
 - d. Leverage shared calendars, membership crossover, and timely topics of shared interest

We have had programs scheduled at the same time as other organizations, including annual conferences, which unintentionally creates competition.

3. Standardize assessment practices and procedures

- a. Rollout a standardized evaluative assessment protocol for all programs
SIGs and Committees tend to create and use their own assessment tools.

Most (if not all) programming assessment questions can be standardized, which cuts down on work by the groups organizing the programs and makes it easier to deploy.

- b. Rollout standardized formative assessment strategy looking at efficacy and chapter goals

Assessment is currently done on a program level and is conducted independently.

Assessment tools may not be including chapter goals.

Assessment data is not currently shared with board unless requested.

4. Investigate alternative targeted programming

- a. Increase virtual programming options and opportunities

Due to COVID-19, we have shifted many of our programs to virtual platforms, but SIG/Committee leaders may need assistance in moving additional programs online.

- b. Create accessible networking and social engagement opportunities

One of the main benefits of being a member with our organization was the networking opportunities. That has become more difficult with both meetings held in different parts of the region and within the online environment.

- c. Facilitate communities of support

Because the New England region is so large, smaller satellite groups could offer more support and collaboration.

Smaller, regional gatherings could help create more networking opportunities.

- d. Establish and maintain accessible programming allowing for equitable participation

One of the difficulties faced in the past was accessibility due to the location of a program, time off to attend programs, and fees with attending. Virtual programming takes away many of these barriers, but a return to face-to-face may bring barriers back.

FY21 Initiatives

Board Structure and Position Cycling Ad Hoc Committee (Created 9/20)

Charge: Review and suggest alternative models to the current board structure beginning with Executive board position descriptions and length of service. The committee will investigate alternative models and offer suggestions that will address issues of realistic role expectations and length of service that will create better recruitment and retention.

Membership: Kari Mofford (Chair), Michael Rodriguez, Erin Jerome

Timeline: To begin later in fall/early winter...Report to Board by May 2021

Technology Assessment Ad Hoc Committee (Created 9/20)

Charge: To assess the Chapter's digital infrastructure needs, inventory and assess technologies now in use, and recommend to the Board changes to technologies and their use by the Chapter, with a special focus on potential applications for Google Suite for Nonprofits.

Examples of technologies subject to assessment: Google Suite for Nonprofits, SurveyMonkey, Eventbrite, Digital Commons (ScholarWorks), Silverstripe, Zoom, and others.

Membership: Michael Rodriguez (chair), Eleta Exline, Peter Cochrane, Eric Cruz, Kelly Faulkner

Timeline: Report to be submitted to the Board by December 31, 2020.

Mission Statement Ad Hoc Committee (Created 9/20)

Charge: To review our current mission statement and if necessary, revise. The committee will bring proposed changes to the Board for approval.

Membership: Kari Mofford (Chair), Vicki Gruzynski, Ariela McCaffrey, Mary MacDonald,

Timeline: Proposal to be submitted to the Board by December 31, 2020

Alternative Targeted Programming Ad Hoc Committee (Created 9/20)

Charge: Investigate and suggest options and best practices for virtual programming; explore ideas for increasing networking opportunities and mentoring.

Membership: Erin Jerome (Chair), Kari Mofford, Ariela McCaffrey, Shu Qian

Timeline: Work will be ongoing throughout the year with regular updates to the Board.

Possibility of becoming a permanent committee.