

Americas Regional Council
Joint Meeting of the Executive and Communications Committees
Meeting Minutes
Sunday, January 22, 2012
12:30 – 1:30 Central Time

In attendance:

Executive Committee: Bill Maes, Chair, presiding
Pat Boze (on telephone)
Joseph Hafner (on telephone)
Jamie Larue
Claudia Timmann (on telephone)

Communications Committee: Gwen Ebbett
Lorraine Haricombe
Wilbur Stolt
Theresa Byrd
Bev Obert
Lynn Baird

OCLC Staff: Pam Bailey
Kate Gaylord
Suzanne Lauer
George Needham

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Bill Maes called the meeting to order. He added a recap of the Friday ARC meeting and Symposium to the agenda.

Jamie LaRue provided an update on the activities of the Nominating Committee. The Committee tried to get people involved who have not been active in OCLC before, and to involve practitioners rather than managers. Several attendees said that this was an excellent slate. Wilbur Stolt suggested getting the slate out before the Midwinter meeting so members can interact with candidates at conference.

Mr. Maes discussed the concept of "Tagging nominees with a constituency." Regional and Global Councils need to get more connected to the membership. The Canadian Advisory Committee is an example of one way to connect, and might be useful as OCLC gets its footing in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Ambassador program is another example of a way of bringing people into a different level of connectivity. Theresa Byrd suggested having a meeting of trustees, Executive Committee, Communications Committee, and Ambassadors at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim. Discussion also turned to trying to launch a pilot involvement program, perhaps in California. Ms. Byrd, noting the size of the state, suggested doing either Northern or Southern California. Mr. Larue asked about the nature of the communication; is it informative or interactive? The consensus was that the communications had to be two-way, with important issues being fed out to both OCLC staff and to the library community. It all comes down to "How does this affect my region, my library, and/or me?"

Mr. Larue described a framework that's happening in Colorado. The people in the communication cadre receive a monthly email that has one information piece and one question that he or she then shares with every listserv and social network to which he or she belongs. Mr. Needham asked how to close the

loop. The communications person summarizes the input that comes back, then posts the summary to the list and to OCLC.

Ms. Byrd asked if OCLC does focus groups specifically about communications and membership at the conference, and Ms. Gaylord noted that we do a number of these at each conference. However, Ms. Gaylord said it would be great to do one just about the Regional Council and the governance structure. Ms. Byrd said that this is not well understood in the community. She also said that this would be a good way to involve younger librarians in the mix. The discussion could be about what OCLC does and how they could be involved.

Ms. Baird said that we need to hold event in places other than ALA meetings if we want to get stronger response from the staff “in the trenches.” Programs need to be done locally to bring in the folks who do not get to travel. Ms. Gaylord said that Ambassadors could manage such meetings at local events. Ms. Bailey said that in the network era, people who represented types of libraries acted as communications conduits for raising questions to the surface, and then sharing the response with the community. A communications commitment, such as Mr. Larue described, could bring in a wealth of information. Mr. Stolt noted that this kind of structure is something that has been missing from the Ambassadors program.

Ms. Bose said that a big challenge for OCLC is to decide whether it is a member-driven organization or a vendor. Commercial organizations do focus groups, and OCLC should be using its members as an important piece of its decision-making process. Mr. Maes said that he has seen OCLC become more attentive to what members are dealing with over the past few meetings he has attended.

Ms. Byrd referred to meetings that OCLC Member Services has been scheduling around the country to share ideas and get input. These programs focus on trends in the profession more than about OCLC specifically. Work flows, new products, and other issues get discussed in small groups. Mr. Needham had spoken at a meeting that discussed Webscale at UCLA in December 2011.

Mr. Stolt said that one of the ideas that were proposed was restoring interest groups to review and discuss specific areas like technical services or reference. He did caution against stretching everyone too thin across a variety of involvement opportunities. (He also thanked Bev Obert and Anne Prestamo for their work in creating the Ambassadors program.) Mr. Larue said that a group of OCLC staffers had visited his library and were asked by a reference librarian, “What does OCLC do for reference?” This led him to think that OCLC could do some of these focused programs by job description, rather than more globally.

Mr. Maes said he would like to see a greater focus on one or two initiatives in which results could be seen and evaluated. Ambassadors could be used to find the appropriate questions.

OCLC has a set of stories about, for example, how Webscale has been used and made library service to their users better. The question is how can we get these stories—which Marketing prepares for OCLC staff for every major conference—into people’s hands so they can answer the questions Mr. Larue’s staff raised. In effect, Ms. Gaylord said, we would love to make the active members an extension of the OCLC staff. There was strong support for this idea. Ms. Ebbett said that there was still a lot of work to be done to get the message out about the “new” OCLC. They still see it as “them and us,” not just “us.” They are not seeing or believing that it is us, and that there has been change.

Discussion turned to the cynicism in the community. Mr. Larue noted that one of the best antidotes for cynicism is the testimonial. Ms. Ebbett said that being tied into what is really needed at the moment,

and being able to talk about it from the library's point of view, would be very useful to librarians. Ms. Byrd said that her librarians were turned positively toward Question Point when they attended a program on how SUNY was using QP.

Mr. Stolt summarized that we need to be looking at a pilot with structure and content that can connect with the membership. Mr. Larue said it is easier to present a calendar than has one message every month than to try to communicate the whole of OCLC in every message.

Mr. Maes asked about the status of the new OCLC website. Ms. Gaylord talked about the upgrade of the content management system, and a new website will be rolled out over the next four months. The roll out begins in March. The new CMS will give us some new capability that we do not have at the moment. The move from the WebJunction authenticated site is gone, so that we can simplify access to the documents and links people need to be active members. There has been very little action on the Ning member-to-member site. There is not enough content to attract people, and if people do not go to the site, they do not leave content that would attract anyone. The idea now is to incorporate some of the Ning features into the new CMS. However, Ms. Gaylord said that staff was reluctant to pull the plug on the Ning site, since it was an idea that came from the ARC Communications Committee. The sense of the group was that if we can bring the key features over to the new CMS, close the Ning site. The interest groups' decline also fed the lack of content in the Ning site.

Mr. Stolt suggested that Bonnie Allen might be interested in taking over the interest groups.

Mr. Maes said that he would be talking to Daniel Boivin, who is responsible for OCLC in Canada and Latin America, about improving internal communications. He also said that he would talk to Anne Van Camp about the needs and wants of museums and archives within the OCLC context. Oleg Kreymer is also interested in this topic. Jamie Larue said that one of the ideas that is percolating in the library space planning is that as space is repurposed it, that it be used for museum and archival displays. Mr. Maes said that this would be a good way to start the discussion with Ms. Van Camp.

There was a short discussion of the Symposium. There was unanimity on the quality of the speaker, Sarah Lacey. The length of the meeting was an issue; we lost about half the people at the break. Mr. Maes asked about whether we can identify attendance online by hour. Ms. Gaylord said we had 205 online attendees and about 200 in the room. People liked the clickers, which was Stewart Bodner's idea.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm Central US time.