

LAUC Membership Report

LAUC Executive Board
September 19, 2014

A. Discussion of By-Laws and Statement of the Problem

The rules governing LAUC membership are set out in Article III of the by-laws.

<http://lauc.ucop.edu/about/bylaws/Bylaws-03-09.pdf>

The by-laws recognize two classes of members: full members who have all privileges and affiliates who are restricted from legislative activity and other privileges. Section 1 defining full membership reads as follows:

Section 1. Membership in LAUC shall consist of all persons in the University holding appointments at half time or more in the librarian series, or in any one of the following titles: University Librarian, Deputy University Librarian, Associate University Librarian, Assistant University Librarian, Law Librarian, Associate Law Librarian, Assistant Law Librarian, or in the same series or titles in an acting capacity.

Full membership, therefore, is based on two criteria: (1) Being a member of the librarian series as defined in the Academic Personnel Manual (APM) or (2) Possessing titles for library administration or law librarians. Last year, research into the case of one campus found that “titles” in the definition appears to refer to title codes in the APM and NOT working titles (although there is a degree of ambiguity in the original documents). For example, it would not be enough for an individual to be referred to as an AUL in the course of their work. They would need to be officially classified in the Associate Librarian series. This implies that library administrators reclassified into a management series would not qualify for LAUC membership. It also implies that those hired to replace librarians who are not classified in the librarian series, in what appears to be an increasing trend, would not qualify for LAUC membership either. Thus, both criteria are subject to trends that could seriously undercut the mission of LAUC and its very existence. Indications are that both trends are already widespread throughout the system. As a result, it was decided to devote this year to re-examining the by-laws for possible revision to align them with the wishes of the LAUC membership and the professional environment. The report below represents a snapshot of the current state of membership consisting of data and rationales that has been compiled from reports from all the campus divisions.

B. Two Target Populations

(1) Management. Six out of the 10 UC campuses have reclassified at least some of their AULs/DUL out of their original academic title codes into a management classification and no

longer qualify for LAUC membership. This trend started 15 years ago. The LAUC by-laws would remove these administrators from LAUC membership.

Reasons to exclude from membership

- The original intention of LAUC was to distinguish librarians as a professional class. Introducing individuals outside a professional classification would detract from this purpose.
- Slippery slope. The management classification does not require academic training. While some individuals are surely qualified, the category creates the possibility of unqualified/uninformed people in future having a significant say in LAUC decisions.
- The advisory function of LAUC suffers by having the voices of the librarian series diluted among other groups.
- Practically speaking, the only membership function used by library administrators is to vote; administrators are barred from LAUC research funds, and they typically do not serve on committees. And voting has never made much sense in that administrators are unique among LAUC members in that they receive the advice of LAUC and have the power to override their recommendations. So for administrators to vote amounts to telling themselves what they think. It could be seen as redundant or even counterproductive in masking or distorting the will of the other library staff. Therefore, removing the vote from library administrators could be seen as having no effect at all and even redressing a problem in the original system.

Reasons to include in membership

- The management retains its authority and a great deal of knowledge about the libraries regardless of its classification. Removing this resource does not benefit LAUC.
- According to one administrator, reclassification was done because the academic criteria of AUL title codes was not appropriate for the type of work being reviewed. Administrators who were tasked with management were being evaluated based on research and instruction. This left them with the choice of neglecting their administrative duties to meet review requirements or of being evaluated unfairly because they were focusing on their job. Does LAUC want our administrators writing scholarly papers or running the library? Removing this classification from LAUC would amount to unfairly punishing the administrators for circumstances outside their control.
- A related concern was that administrators in an academic classification could be subject to review by librarians sitting on evaluation committees. This creates a conflict of interest in having individuals judged by their own subordinates. As with the preceding, removing classified management punishes them for following a reasonable course of action.

- The advisory function of LAUC gains by the additional knowledge and perspective of the reclassified management.

(2) Non-librarian series. A large number of non-members participate in LAUC in the form of committee appointments or individual presentations by special invitation. This is not inconsistent with the current by-laws and no non-LAUC members in this group appear to be exercising the core member functions of making motions, voting, or holding office. A significant population of individuals on staff or to be hired share the work of the librarian series without qualifying for membership. The current by-laws would exclude this population from full membership.

Reasons to exclude

- As with reclassified management, this population would confuse the original purpose of LAUC to distinguish a professional class of librarians.
- As with reclassified management, the advisory function of LAUC would suffer if the voice of the librarian series is diluted among other groups.
- Certain LAUC committees such as those that review the librarian series or dispense research funding would be very problematical or inappropriate for this group.
- Unions, review issues, and job concerns may be sufficiently different for this group that they would either be unengaged with LAUC discussions or confuse the agenda.

Reasons to include

- As with reclassified management, the advisory function of LAUC gains from additional knowledge in librarianship.
- LAUC membership has been slowly but steadily shrinking for some time due to a combination of hiring freezes to redress budget cuts, demographics of the job market which make fewer replacements available, and changes to the profession where other staff classes are doing work formerly done by librarians. Incorporation of non-members in some form would offset a steady erosion of LAUC's representation in the library.

C. The Identity of the Librarian as Academic Professional

This is a global issuing embracing all aspects of the membership question. The issue will be discussed in relation to a revision of LAUC's Position Paper 5 on this topic in the near future. Topics include defining the value of an academic identity; appropriate ways of signifying this identity (in terms of title codes, functions within the library or something else); how this identity best realizes itself and relates to other relevant groups (e.g. through LAUC membership).

D. Librarian Series Classification

- To date, LAUC has not found a clear description of how the librarian classification series is assigned. The MOU states that the MLS, while commonly associated with this series, is not a determining factor. Individuals with other advanced degrees and appropriate experience can be assigned to this classification. Who makes the decision is not clear either and appears to result from a negotiation between numbers of groups. The library administration and especially the UL play a prominent role. Campus units such as Human Resources are also involved. Another group, perhaps the Academic Senate, may have right of refusal in determining whether the position fits under the broad classification of “academic” titles or not. LAUC has not been able to discover fully how the librarian series classification is assigned.
- Money may be a reason why a classified individual is NOT assigned to the librarian series according to one administrator. LAUC found in a report of its Diversity Committee in 2012 that libraries are competing for the same pool of people who may go into industry or academia instead. <http://lauc.ucop.edu/committees/cd/cd-final-2012-2013.pdf> (See p.24ff.) Pay is obviously a key factor in the choice as a result of supply and demand. An administrator may decide that the interests of the library lie with hiring a more qualified person for higher pay outside of the librarian series rather than a less qualified one within it. This line of reasoning suggests that the librarian series could actually impede better service. Excluding such a person from LAUC could reinforce this paradox.
- One campus has raised the possibility of bringing the library series classification into alignment with professional work in the library by either having the necessary people gain MLSs or by having library administrators increase salaries of the librarian series to make it competitive. However, requiring busy professionals to attain an advanced degree solely to standardize the LAUC membership does not seem likely. And redefining and changing the salary structure of university employee classifications may be outside the power of even ULs.

E. Statement of CoUL

CoUL offers the following reflection on LAUC’s membership issue:

“CoUL is aware of the issues that are emerging around the definitions of membership currently included in the LAUC by-laws. CoUL encourages LAUC, when it considers these issues, to think about the increasingly diverse range of individuals who provide professional services in our libraries and whether their inclusion in the membership definition would help LAUC to better carry out its role as an advisory body to UCOP, campus administration, and library administration on professional academic library issues. CoUL also suggests that LAUC explore different governance models for structures that will allow all appropriate groups to be fairly represented.”

F. Opinion of the Membership

- As gleaned from division reports, the LAUC membership has not committed itself to any position.
- There is great concern expressed for preserving the role of the librarian series both as a practical matter and matter of principle. Incorporation of non-members into many of the standing committees and much of LAUC business would be problematic. There is also a concern about preserving the original intent and purpose of the organization to distinguish a class of professional librarians.
- There is also great awareness of the forces of change and a need to accommodate it and to hear all the voices working with the library.
- There are significant questions of how to include non-members to give them a purpose and also provide a benefit to LAUC. Namely, is there anything to be gained by giving non-members the core membership functions in addition to what is currently allowed of non-members which is participation in membership meetings or committee or other assignments by invitation?

G. Options for Revising the Membership By-Laws

(1) Status quo. Reclassified management are removed from LAUC membership and relieved of the privileges of making motions, voting, and holding office. Those privileges are retained only for the librarian series and designated administrative title codes. The current by-laws permit non-members to attend membership meetings and the state Assembly and to serve on committees or perform other functions by invitation. This option would consolidate and define membership for librarians. It carries the risk of alienating library administrators and degrading communication. It also risks leaving LAUC behind in the transformation of libraries so that LAUC is reduced to a backwater concerned with the bureaucracy of its own review processes and whose advice is no longer relevant.

(2) The Big Tent. Admit anyone with a professional classification or an MLS or any other attribute relevant to LAUC. All members could serve on all committees and vote. This would resolve the issue of inclusion. However, legally, it is not entirely possible. LAUC research funds are restricted to members of the librarian series by the University's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which is outside of LAUC's ability to change. Service on review committees and perhaps others would be highly problematic for those outside of the librarian series. The new categories of members may also have sufficient differences in their issues and orientation that there is no basis for meaningful action or cooperation within the forum of LAUC. This option in the words of one commentator could constitute a sea change where LAUC moves

into a new area of more powerful advocacy with additional voices. Or it could leave LAUC as a dysfunctional mess.

(3) Compromise. Some mechanism would allow new categories of staff to interact with LAUC for mutual benefit without interfering with the structures of the librarian series. While in principle this is attractive, it is not clear how this would be brought about. It might consist of identifying very select groups for full membership or extending partial privileges to a wider selection. How to balance the interests of LAUC and new members is the central problem here.

H. The Plan

(1) Issue a report that communicates the problem to the membership and collect feedback.

(2) Discuss Position Paper 5 on the Academic Librarian and gather feedback.

(3) Task LAUC's Committee on Professional Governance (CPG) to digest the information, gather additional feedback from members and issue recommendations on whether to revise the by-laws and how.

(4) Discuss the recommendations and vote on them in LAUC's Spring Assembly 2015 and the subsequent annual elections. Please note that a 2/3 majority of all members statewide must approve any change to the by-laws. Otherwise, the status quo will persist which amounts to Option 1 above.

All LAUC members are invited to give feedback on any aspect of this report to their local Division Chairs. Or they may write directly to the LAUC President, Matt Conner, at mconner@ucdavis.edu. Messages to the President will be considered confidential. Unless requested otherwise, the author's name, campus affiliation, and any other identifying detail will be removed before the message is sent to the Executive Board and the CPG, and messages will be transmitted directly without endorsement or filtering of any kind. Feedback in an ongoing way is welcome until the conclusion of this process at the end of the academic year.