

Membership and the Future of Librarianship at the University of California

In 2014 the LAUC Executive Board decided that a re-examination of the definition of LAUC membership in Article III of the LAUC Bylaws (dated March 23, 2009) was necessary, due to changes in the professional environment. LAUC's Committee on Professional Governance (CPG) was charged with the task of recommending revision of the bylaws (or retention of the status quo) after considering the issues and gathering feedback from the LAUC membership. This effort culminated in amended LAUC Bylaws, approved and effective in April 2016.

The re-examination of LAUC membership was driven by three trends. The first was the shrinking pool of those eligible for full LAUC membership, as defined by the bylaws, due in part to reductions in new hires. Second was the reclassification of AULs (Assistant/Associate University Librarians) out of their original academic title codes into a management classification that disqualified them from LAUC membership. Third was the defining of new library positions outside of the librarian series.

One option considered was to reclassify management and non-librarian series positions within LAUC membership to offset the erosion of LAUC representation, but the advisory function of LAUC would suffer if the voice of the librarian series were diluted among other groups. LAUC members chose not to pursue this. Another option defined LAUC membership according to criteria based on the nature of librarian work, rather than APM title codes, but was deemed unwieldy, indeterminate, and likely to be rejected by the UC Office of the President (UCOP). Also rejected was the option of including anyone with an MLS degree, regardless of job classification.

LAUC members also expressed concern for preserving the role of the librarian series, both as a practical matter and as a matter of principle. Incorporation of an expanded membership into standing committees and much of LAUC business would be problematic, involving non-librarians in librarian peer review and allocation of professional activity funds designated, by contract, for the librarian series.

LAUC members also wished to preserve the original intent of LAUC, an organization representing a defined class of professional librarians. However, LAUC members were also aware of the need to accommodate change and to acknowledge the voices of all library personnel.

The LAUC Bylaws, as amended in 2016, reaffirm the academic title codes included in LAUC membership in Article III, Section 1.a). Deputy University Librarian has been deleted; it is a working title with no academic title or payroll code. University Librarian is omitted here, because it has a unique status different from the other title codes and is included separately in Article III, Section 1.b). While full membership is not expanded, Article III, Section 4, affiliate membership, offers a compromise on inclusiveness through additional language that gives discretion to the LAUC divisions to expand their affiliate membership, thereby enabling increased participation in LAUC functions by non-members.