

MPLA Steward for Reorganization and Transition
Carol Hammond Board Report July 2006

I am pleased to report that we completed all of the tasks for this time period on schedule, and we are nearly through with all of the steps necessary for finishing the transition to the new organizational structure.

Electronic Communities

Members were surveyed in February on their preferences for Electronic Communities and 265 participated. The survey was the cover story for the February newsletter that came out right on time and provided needed PR for the project. Although we have not reviewed the special interest areas of members in many years, the groups that got the most votes, with the exception of library administration and library instruction, were fairly consistent with what was in place. Government Documents as a group was eliminated, as it received too few votes. Some interest areas were combined, and additional new areas of interest were identified, which we hope will be addressed in the new "Hot Topics" community.

Many thanks to Dan Chaney for setting up the online survey, which he did in almost no time, handling a variety of questions that arose during the process and making some good suggestions and changes for the better in the survey. His suggestion that we add space for members to suggest other areas brought in significant additional ideas that reflect the changes in profession.

We established 13 new Electronic communities: Academic Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, Children's Services & School Libraries, Collection Development, Hot Topics, Intellectual Freedom & Censorship Issues, Library Administration, Library Instruction, New Members, Public Libraries, Reference Services, State Agencies, Cooperatives & Systems, and Technical Services. These were the top vote getters in the survey. We increased from 8 interest groups to 13.

Members were invited to register for as many electronic communities as they wished to join and did so during the month of April. Additionally, those who were in a section which was parallel or nearly so to a new electronic community were assigned to that community.

Former Section chairs and/or elects assumed the role of moderator for the corresponding electronic communities. All of the chair-elects who had expected to have a role in MPLA and who still wanted one with the reorganization got an assignment; one or two opted out, and a few new players were appointed.

Thanks to Sharon Osenga for completing this in a timely way!

We needed to resolve some technical issues about where to host the electronic discussion feature; several people were concerned that whatever we had needed to interact seamlessly with email, so it would not require signing on to MemberClicks (or anything else) and discussion posting would simply be sent to the email of everyone in a group. We explored using Yahoo and Blogger.com but found our best solution would be through MemberClicks who can host the lists for us. 14 groups were set up for a one-time fee: 13 ECs plus one for the EC moderators plus me. The ECs were ready to operate June 1.

Many thanks to Judy Zelenski who investigated and resolved the technology platform issues for the ECs and then put in a tremendous amount of time on registration and transitioning members from sections to the new ECs through the MemberClicks directory, and her great PR work in the newsletter.

MemberClicks has some cumbersome sign up issues and as well as maintenance problems for us when email addresses change. I recommend we formally ask them as the system vendor to remedy these programming problems.

Also, the inactive discussion space on memberclicks for each EC should be closed, as these have been replaced by interactive discussion lists. There is some confusion among the moderators about the purpose of these, and I believe the email lists now provide for a better mechanism for group exchange.

A group for the EC moderators was also set up since this is a new way of operating for MPLA and we wanted to be able to share questions, answers and ideas with this group who will be the leaders in getting each EC up and running. Guidelines have been developed and provided for all the moderators (copy attached).

The ECs, however, have been slow to organize and become active. It was hoped that we created some interest, awareness and momentum for this new concept through the survey, the registration process and the several newsletter articles that would translate into more activity. While a few of the groups have begun discussion, activity can currently be very accurately described as low. The moderators are not using the list created for the group to exchange information about what they are doing and how it is going, nor have they sought advice so I will try to contact them before the Board meeting to get some reaction to what is (or isn't) happening. This group is likely to need continued coaching, mentoring and attention to be sure the ECs become operational and successful. Judy and I are members of all of the ECs so we can view and monitor what activity is going on.

Long Range Plan Manual of Procedure

Work on the Manual of Procedure continues, and the long range plan should be updated soon after the July board meeting. These are on or ahead of schedule.

Training

The final piece is the question of training, and that I will bring to the Board for advice. The original charge was to develop a training program to help groups and leaders with skills and processes needed to hold effective face-to-face meetings, telephone conference calls, and online discussion groups. I would like to revisit this and ask: who needs training, of what kind, how it should be delivered, and by whom.

...and it is done!

This will complete the transition. This process was carried out on schedule with the help of many but must particularly thank Betty Dance, Dan, Judy, and Sharon. Judy especially provided the needed PR through the newsletter and many hours of work in her role as Executive Secretary.

On a personal note, I've been involved with this effort for the past four years, when it came out of the session to update the long range plan when I was president-elect. I will complete the training piece hopefully by the end of the year or soon thereafter and then I believe the position of Steward for Reorganization and Transition can close. It has been an interesting and rewarding challenge and one of the more unique assignments I've had in my career; in addition to implementing the new structure we transitioned to a new executive secretary after many years and that became a piece of the project as well. I am sure the organization will need additional adjustment as time goes on, but I believe we have accomplished a major and necessary change that will serve us well for the future. As always, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with all of you; being part of a team that makes this kind of progress is a very good feeling!