



Meeting Notes

New-ish Deans Focus Group

November 29, 2017 – Miami, FL

Attendees:

David Banush, Tulane University

Cecilia Botero, University of Mississippi

Don Gilstrap, University of Alabama

Diedre Scaggs, University of Kentucky

Jeff Steely, Georgia State University

ASERL Board Facilitators:

Yolanda Cooper, Emory University

Toby Graham, University of Georgia

1) Welcome and Introductions

Yolanda Cooper asked attendees to share their overall impressions of the Association –

Don Gilstrap, University of Alabama

- Don made a comparison to GWLA, noting that ASERL is as good as GWLA, or better. Libraries know ARL as “the group that talks about doing things, while ASERL is the group that does them.” He commented that ASERL could do a better job in marketing itself. He clarified that by marketing, he meant for ASERL to promote their programs and services to member institutions – keeping these activities in the forefront. Don further commented that he feels some pressure at his institution to work more closely with other libraries – “why don’t you guys work together?” Involvement with ASERL programs would benefit from being more visible.
- Another noteworthy difference that distinguishes GWLA from ASERL are the group-licensed products, services, and deals. The question was asked if ASERL should support group licensing? Don wished ASERL would do more group licensing, particularly over services/products obtained through his library’s participation in NAAL. He noted there are just a few institutions that drive the NAAL-licensed products/services rather than a broader base of research libraries that ASERL could provide. Don acknowledged the challenge would be that many ASERL libraries already have the packages that would be negotiated so we would not have leverage that new customers might bring to the table. For GWLA members – if members walk away from a deal – it can greatly impact the outcome. Volume carries weight in negotiating, and ASERL might not have the leverage. Statistics for ILL – turn-around time, etc. were noted as useful services that GWLA provides.

David Banush, Tulane University

- David expressed the concern that marketing activities might be premature. What does or what can ASERL do – or isn’t – doing well?
- He also noted there are a lot of library groups that handle licensing.

- David finds the Kudzu resource sharing and the concept behind Scholars Trust to be more valuable than some of the other things we could do. Kudzu & Scholars Trust have a regional focus – he believes geographic proximity does matter with physical materials – and proximity is not being addressed by other groups.
- He indicated that there would be political resistance if Tulane tried to pull out of LOUIS (especially their group licensing activities). Tulane’s presence or absence doesn’t really affect the group, but it would be viewed poorly if they withdrew.
- David also noted that shared storage isn’t something that LOUIS is prepared to handle. Collective management of shared collections is a big project for libraries, but it isn’t glitzy. It is currently easier to use existing facilities to store materials. It is a long road to decide on a shared facility, but he believes it would be incredibly useful. He noted the endless talks about building or renting facilities – and that it is a difficult project to coordinate but would be something to consider down the road. The facility could be owned and operated by third party. He mentioned Iron Mountain, and also indicated that that NYU uses an outsourced system.
- He also cautioned that ASERL should not try to undertake programs or services that are already being handled well by others.

Cecilia Botero, University of Mississippi

- Cecilia noted ASERL’s professional development activities are very important to her institution. From her perspective, the more programs we offer, the better – gives librarians/staff something they can watch in a webcast. Regional in-person meetings are relatively accessible, too.
- Several others also offered favorable comments, commenting that ASERL does an impressive job of using staff from member institutions to present/share information.

Deirdre Scaggs, University of Kentucky

- Deidre noted that she has attended ASERL meetings both as an alternate to her former Dean and as part of the Special Collections group (Fall 2016 Joint Meeting, Durham, NC). She felt the Special Collections meeting was the best learning experience at that level that she has had. She met a number of people with similar needs/problems. She commented that this concept would be valuable to repeat with different groups – to continue networking opportunities and to develop professional relationships. Others agreed that this would be worth holding once a year, rotating specialty groups.

Jeff Steely, Georgia State University

- Jeff commented that he is trying to come to terms with GSU’s participation level in various ASERL programs and why they do or do not participate. There might have been a different mindset at the time when the project started and things may have changed. He felt there is a need to walk through the programs again to understand if the decisions that were made in the past are still relevant. GSU may not have been very focused on partnering – he expressed a desire to learn more about their role in ASERL.

2) Did attendees feel welcome when they were appointed as an ASERL library dean/director? Did they get the information needed?

- John’s “welcome to ASERL” calls and introductions are extremely appreciated. The comment was made that GWLA did not do that.

- The site visits were seen as helpful, but attendees suggested something more in-depth and institution specific. There is just a lot of information, a lot of programs and it can be difficult to know the questions to ask due to their lack of history with a given program. It was suggested that ASERL maintain a systematic list of all the programs, when they started, and their primary goals/purpose – to allow new deans can figure out why they do or don't participate.

3) Do you see the ASERL meetings as a Deans-level professional development opportunity?

Yes – ability to learn from more experienced deans. The comment was made that even when attending ARL meetings, ASERL deans are more likely to associate with others from ASERL. ASERL is a highly valued peer to peer network.

4) Would you be interested in participating on the ASERL Board?

General agreement was yes, possibly. David commented that he had volunteered twice for Board positions -- and some of his staff had volunteered for committees -- and had not been chosen to serve.

5) Other Ideas / Suggestions for ASERL Programming

- a) David commented on the need for improved staffing and recruitment efforts to encourage young people to look at libraries as a profession/career choice. Tulane planned to engage with their local high school career centers - though he acknowledged interest has been limited. His concern is not just turnover among library deans, as there has been a lot of turnover at all levels. Is there a mentoring role for ASERL? He noted that some geographic areas have difficulties with recruiting compared to other parts of the country. There is a need for networking/mentoring to bring people into leadership roles – possibly an ASERL leadership institute?
- b) Deirdre noted her attendance ASERL meetings as a substitute in the past was a positive experience.
- c) One concern noted with “leadership institutes” is that they are either too expensive or not really institutes.
- d) An alternative suggestion was to possibly hold un-conference leadership opportunities in conjunction with ASERL meetings. While the dean attends the ASERL meeting, their staff are able to visit a host institution to learn more about a specific program of interest. Either have a specialty group meeting – or just schedule an appointment or one-on-one session with someone at that host institution.
- e) Could ASERL host a mini-conference, similar to the CIC academic fellows program? Site visits by CIC librarians to other CIC institutions are a valuable part of that conference. Attendees meet with the president of institution, toured the library, and attended presentations (from center for academic excellence, IR, other units, etc.) The question was asked if there was a “project” as part of the program, and no – not necessarily so. Attendees could apply for funding for travel.
- f) The ARL Fellowship Program (RLLF) also incorporates some of these ideas. This could be started on a small scale within ASERL: Communicate with ASERL deans/directors first to identify small pool of potential candidates.
- g) There was also some interest in additional conversations on how to ASERL could fortify its shared print programming. One attendee that collection analysis needs a broader base of participation to make sense – similar to the EAST model.

- h) Deidre suggested that a study like GWLA conducted regarding library connections to student success would be useful. She noted that the U-Kentucky Provost would be very happy if ASERL could do something similar.

Closing

Yolanda and Toby made closing remarks and thanked attendees for their time and feedback. The meeting adjourned at 12:55pm.