CLS Communications Committee Minutes
ALA Annual Conference – Toronto
Saturday, 21 June 2003, 11:30-12:30
Delta Chelsea Whistler Room

Present: Catherine Lee, Chair; Terry Ballard; Anne Garrison, Recorder; Phil Swan; Mike Thompson; Claudia Timmann; Damon Hickey.

Introductions

Introductions were made. Turn out was good compared to other committees whose meetings had to be canceled due to low attendance at the conference. Anne Garrison volunteered to serve as recorder. Members reviewed the Committee roster for changes/corrections.

Executive Committee Report

Damon Hickey reported that ALA is reviewing and establishing rules for running virtual meetings at ALA conferences. He also reported that work is being done to clean up all the dead links on the new ALA web site.

Newsletter Report

Catherine Lee reported that for quite a while, we have offered our newsletter in both pdf format and in a stripped down html format on the CLS website. This was done to enable readers with older browsers easier access to the content. However, with advances in technology and the wide availability of Adobe Acrobat, the Committee discussed whether providing two formats is still a worthwhile project. The Committee reached consensus to discontinue the stripped down html version of the newsletter and to provide one electronic version in pdf on the website.

Website Report

Ruth Connell sent an e-mail report on converting the CLS site to the new ALA website format using their new content management system. There are innumerable problems with the new ALA tool and Ruth found the process tedious with unsatisfactory results. She had to upload each page individually (over 500 pages) using a system that is slow, frequently down, and not compatible with Netscape. The urls are long and ugly, the headers and side bars crowded and unattractive, and there are many broken links. Ruth recommends other sections who have not moved their sites to ALA to refrain from doing so until ALA resolves these issues. If anybody notices broken links, please bring them to Ruth's attention.

Listserv Report

We currently have approximately 1060 subscribers to the COLLIB-L listserv. The Committee discussed whether the listserv should remain privately owned (currently by Damon Hickey, formerly by Larry Oberg) and housed on an independent server or should move to the ALA server. The Committee previously received a summary of responses to an informal survey, prepared and distributed by members Mike Thompson and Phil Swan, of listowners with

distribution lists housed on the ALA server. A copy of this summary is attached to these minutes as [Appendix 1](#). D. Hickey reports that there will likely be no substantial changes to the listserv if housed at ALA. The only difference would be a change in the domain name. The move will enable COLLIB-L to gain "official" status from ALA as the CLS listserv, we will be able to automatically subscribe new and renewing CLS members, and changing listowners should be an easier task.

D. Hickey, the current listowner, is stepping down due to his upcoming responsibilities as incoming chair-elect of CLS. Mike Thompson will assume responsibility as listowner (and as such, ex officio member of the CLS Communications Committee) once the list is moved to the ALA server. Hickey assured the Committee that the moderator duties are not onerous but mainly involve changing subscriptions when addresses change, and sending out periodic reminders of the rules and regulations of the listserv.

Terry Ballard will work on updating the COLLIB-L access instructions to make clearer the signing on and off directions.

Library Site of the Month Feature

Claudia Timmann and Denise Shorey have begun preliminary work developing guidelines for the CLS Library Site of the Month feature. Choosing a site will involve evaluating criteria such as usability, user friendliness, terminology, and links. The Committee is considering using COLLIB-L and/or the website to solicit votes on final candidates for site of the month. The newsletter could biannually recognize the finalists and the monthly winners.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Garrison

APPENDIX 1

Responses to Listserv Questionnaire
CLS Communications Committee
2003 ALA Annual Conference

Compiled for 2003 Annual Conference by committee members Mike Thompson and Phil Swan for the purpose of checking with other distribution lists housed on the ALA server to gather information regarding a potential move of COLLIB-L to ALA.

Respondents are as follows:

(a) Barbara D'Angelo, MOUSS-L (Management and Operation of User Services Section List)
(b) Lorraine Olley, LAMA-LBCD (LAMA Library Building Consultants Discussion List)
(c) Claire Bellanti, LAMA-Storage (LAMA Storage Discussion Group List)
(d) Nicole Wheatley, PLA-NEWS (Public Library Association News)
(e) Leslie Madden, ULS-L (ULS University Libraries List)

(f) Anne Haynes, MARS-L (RUSA Machine Assisted Reference Section List)
(g) Nichole Gilbert from YALSA (responded for all the YALSA lists I am assuming)
(h) Hugh Thompson Director of Publications for ACRL [I]
(i) Hugh Thompson Director of Publications for ACRL [II] (Phil & Mike each inadvertently sent a survey)
(j) Robin Paynter, AAMES-L (ACRL Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Section)
(k) Barbara H. Will, ASCLA (Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies List)
(l) Jeannette Smithee, ASCLA (Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies List)

Responses:

1. What are the responsibilities of your list owner?

(a) Mostly maintenance. Most people don't sign off a list when they've moved so I delete bounced messages. Posts can also only be sent to the list by subscribers. When non-subscriber posts bounce, I usually either forward it to the list if appropriate or let the poster know the list is only open to subscribers. (D'Angelo)

(b) The list owner (the LAMA staff) send occasional messages and updates to the vendors on the list, moderate the list and control subscriptions. (Olley)

(c) Pretty simple now, but more cumbersome when first set up. I basically deal with bouncebacks when they occur, and helping people learn how to use the listserve. At the beginning I helped set up the list of names. The list was imported into the ALA system. I went in and cleaned up a few problems. (Bellanti)

(d) My responsibilities are primarily to manage subscriptions to the list, as well as drops from the list. That includes monitoring error messages, and removing addresses from the list that are no longer valid. (Wheatley)

(e) Basically to monitor the list for any problems that subscribers, or those interested in subscribing, have. (Madden)

(f) Serve as moderator of MARS-L with responsibility for management and operation, including publicity. Participate as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the MARS Executive Committee. Participate as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the MARS Publications Committee. (Haynes)

(g) There are two owners to our lists. In every case at least one owner is an ALA staff member, the other is often a member. The basic responsibilities of the owner are to assist people in subscribing/unsubscribing and dealing with error messages. The number of error messages and questions about subscribing and unsubscribing depends on the size of the list. (Gilbert)

(h) List owners will add and delete members, if it is a closed list. For open lists, members subscribe and unsubscribe themselves. All error messages go to owners, who must then determine the reason for the message and take corrective action as required. For example, errors will be generated by servers that are temporarily down, in which case nothing need be done. However, often members change address but don't update the list, in which case the owner must delete the subscriber and/or resubscribe them with the new address. Owners also

can change configuration (such as from moderated to unmoderated etc.) but these actions occur only rarely. (Thompson - I)

(i) ALA policy stipulates that lists have two owners; one a member of the section and one a staff person. The owner is generally responsible for managing the list membership. If you have an open list, members will subscribe and unsubscribe themselves. If closed, the owner must take care of this. Owners also get the error messages, which can be nondelivery due to temporary conditions, or "user not found." Often subscribers change email addresses or move and do not unsubscribe. The owner will then have to delete these names. I have found that 95% of the owners job tends to be subscribing and/or unsubscribing users. (Thompson - II)

(j) You might want to contact ALA about this as they may have changed unbeknownst to me. In general though, my experience has been that after setting up the list there are pretty minimal responsibilities-answering bounced back email or email sent from someone who is not on the list, updating the list with new member email addresses, etc. (Paynter)

(k) The discussion list which I facilitate is under ASCLA, one of the ALA divisions, and ALA does the bulk of the work-but that may vary by division. I don't have to maintain it or work with the subscriptions (ALA does all that), and there haven't been any problems. (Will)

(l) I did do the problem subscribes/unsubscribes for the people who had trouble doing it on their own. Mostly it was unsubscribes for "bounces" at abandoned accounts. (Smithee)

2. Who is responsible for list maintenance?

(a) I am. There is also someone in the RUSA office that is a list owner but she only intercedes if there is a problem I can't resolve. (D'Angelo)

(b) LAMA office (Olley)

(c) Me and a staff person in the LAMA office. (Bellanti)

(d) I am in charge of maintaining the list, although each list must have a minimum of 2 owners. In PLA both owners are staff. (Wheatley)

(e) Hugh Thompson at ALA. [HE IS (h & i)] (Madden)

(f) The list owner (Haynes)

(g) The owner is responsible for list maintenance. (Gilbert)

(h) See #1 above. (Thompson - I)

(i) There is little or no list maintenance involved beyond that described in #1. The occasional unusual commands, such as setting up a digest, can be done by the staff person here. (Thompson - II)

(j) In terms of adding new members to the list my information is that it is up to the listowner-that is ALA does not automatically subscribe new members. Likewise, if people change their email addresses or use a different email address to submit to the list it sometimes gets a bit messy-but not too bad. (Paynter)

(k) [NO RESPONSE GIVEN] (Will)

(l) In the case of the ASCLA-ICAN list the listowner did it. The list was small (a few hundred) enough that it was manageable. (Smithee)

3. Who is responsible for subscription problems & are these easily resolved?

(a) I am. For the most part. Most problems are caused by people un-subscribing when they move or change email addresses. (D'Angelo)

(b) LAMA office; yes (Olley)

(c) Anyone can sign themselves up. It is not a closed list. The only time I need to step in is when someone doesn't understand the instructions. (Bellanti)

(d) Again, the primary list owner is responsible for problems. Our lists don't typically have many issues of that nature, so they are fairly easily resolved. Since I don't know the nature of ACRL lists I'm not able to comment on the ease or difficulty of maintaining their lists. (Wheatley)

(e) The owner of the list (me) or Hugh Thompson. Problems are easily solved. (Madden)

(f) List owner (Haynes)

(g) The owner will handle these problems, and they are typically very easy to resolve. If the problem is not something the owner can resolve, a question can be sent to ALA's ITTS Helpdesk, and they can help resolve the problem. (Gilbert)

(h) See #1 above. (Thompson - I)

(i) See no. 1 again. Resolving these problems can take some time, i.e. determining if a person's email has changed or they have left their institution. Of course, a lot of this should be the responsibility of the subscriber. For an open list, the owner shouldn't have to resolve too many problems. (Thompson - II)

(j) I haven't had too many subscription problems as most people now are familiar with how to subscribe and unsubscribe-having this information on your group's website is useful. If someone does not get stuck the commands to subscribe or unsubscribe are pretty simple for the administrator. (Paynter)

(k) [NO RESPONSE GIVEN] (Will)

(l) For any problems not solved by using the ALA ListProc site, I was able to send e-mail inquiries to the Division office (ASCLA) and/or to the ALA Information Dept. All resolved easily. (Smithee)

4. Is your list unmoderated?

(a) Yes but only open to subscribers. (D'Angelo)

(b) No (Olley)

(c) Unmoderated (Bellanti)

(d) All PLA lists are unmoderated. (Wheatley)

(e) Yes. (Madden)

(f) No, it's moderated (Haynes)

(g) Our lists are unmoderated. If a list is moderated, this adds an extra step for the owner. The owner would have to approve each message before it can be sent to the list. Our most active list can receive up to 50 messages a day. (Gilbert)

(h) This is the choice of the owner. Most lists are unmoderated. Someone must take responsibility for moderated lists and approve all posts, which can be a burden that usually is not necessary. (Thompson - I)

(i) A list can be set up as moderated or unmoderated. However, a moderated list has to be moderated by someone, so there needs to be a commitment by a member. For a larger list like COLLIB-L, that could be a lot of work. Are you moderated now? You can follow the same model. (Thompson - II)

(j) Yes, though only members can send messages to the list. Traffic is pretty minimal so this has not been a problem. (Paynter)

(k) Our list is not moderated, but I see to it that accurate and timely information goes into it-if necessary, I'll send out a correction of what someone else has posted. (Will)

(l) Yes (Smithee)

5. Is the archiving acceptable?

(a) MOUSS-L is mostly used for posting announcements so accessing the archive has never been an issue. (D'Angelo)

(b) Yes (Olley)

(c) I haven't used the archiving myself. (Bellanti)

(d) PLA does not archive any lists that I'm aware of, so I wouldn't be able to comment on that. (Wheatley)

(e) I don't know. We've never really used this. Hugh Thompson might be able to answer this question. You may email him at hthompso@ala.org (Madden)

(f) Yes (Haynes)

(g) Actually, right now I am having a little trouble with the archives to our biggest list, but generally, I do not have trouble with archives. (Gilbert)

(h) Yes, all ALA lists are archived. (Thompson - I)

(i) The lists are archived. (Thompson - II)

(j) I don't think we have archiving-most of the emails are not the sort of thing generally that would be of interest to archive-job announcements, etc. (Paynter)

(k) We don't archive it, so the issue has never come up. I imagine that moderating and archiving are individual division decisions, but I honestly don't know. (Will)

(l) Yes, for our purposes. (Smithee)

6. Was it difficult to get the list up and running on the ALA server (if anyone is around who can answer that...)?

(a) Yes, it's been several years but I think it was up and running in about a day or two. Requests to set up new lists are routed through the RUSA office and they are VERY responsive. When MOUSS-L was set up, RUSA didn't have a webmaster so we went through the executive director. Once a webmaster was hired for the division, he became the backup owner for all of the listservs. Any problems that I can't handle through my access privileges, I send to him. If he isn't able to fix them, he forwards them on to the central ALA person. Although this may seem as though it would take more time to resolve issues, I don't think I've had something go unresolved for more than a day. (D'Angelo)

(b) The Listproc system is not easy to use, but ALA is switching to another system. Ask helpdesk@ala.org for more details. [SENT OFF EMAIL TO HELPDESK, BUT RECEIVED NO REPLY] [ALSO, ASKED HUGH THOMPSON AND HE STATED THAT I.T. TOLD HIM THAT THEY WERE EVALUATING SOME ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE AND A FINAL DECISION HASN'T BEEN MADE YET, BUT IT IS DEFINITELY UNDER CONSIDERATION.] (Olley)

(c) Not at all. The LAMA people helped tremendously. In fact, this leads me to think that I better check and see if the LAMA staff person assigned to my list is still around. (Bellanti)

(d) Typically there is a few days turnaround in getting a list going. Of course, this probably depends on the size of your list and how much time it would take to subscribe everyone. (Wheatley)

(e) No. It was fairly easy according to Bruce Henson who originally set up the list. (Madden)

(f) It was already running when I took over. (Haynes)

(g) I believe that a new list would have to be created. Meaning that there would be a new address to send messages to... something@ala.org. and all the users would have to be re-subscribed. (They could subscribe themselves. You could send a message out on the existing list with directions on how to subscribe to the new list.) THEN AGAIN, I am not sure how this would work. But, if a new list is created, it is very simple. It involves an ALA staff member filling out a one page form and it takes ITTS only a few days to create. (Gilbert)

(h) Not a difficult process. I have done many of them. Note: for an open list that is fairly large, we usually send a message to the old list telling members they must resubscribe. This serves to weed the list and owners then can avoid the lengthy task of subscribing all the members to the new list. (Thompson - I)

(i) It is easy to establish a list. The only problem to be addressed is transferring the subscribers. The owners can do that but it involves some work. Another approach, for an open list, is to send a message asking current subscribers to resubscribe on the new list. This also helps to weed the list. (Thompson - II)

(j) Not particularly, Hugh Thompson helped us out-don't know if he is still there or not. (Paynter)

(k) ALA was quick to get it up. (Will)

(l) The profile form was simple. We started from scratch; there was not an existing subscriber list. (Smithee)

7. Are there other factors you feel that we should be considering?
(a) It's not clear what will be changing or how much will be changing with the new ALA design and content management system. I'm assuming this won't effect the listservs but I suppose there is the potential that it may change at some point. Otherwise, I'd say having ALA host MOUSS-L and the other lists that I maintain for various MOUSS committees has been a good experience. It works well, problems are resolved quickly and easily, maintenance if simple. Of course, my experience is based on working with an exceptional division webmaster at RUSA who is responsive and proactive about working with the section webmasters. (D'Angelo)
(b) Lists are a great way to inexpensively communicate with groups of people, keep track of threads, and foster interactivity. The archiving function makes them much more useful than using personal address books. (Olley)

(c) I was hosting this list on my server here at the SRLF, and was very happy to turn it over to ALA. It is much less difficult. (Bellanti)

(d) I strongly recommend that you speak to an ACRL staff person. I'm not sure how applicable the information from other divisions will be, since each division may handle their lists differently. (Wheatley)

(e) I'm attaching some usage guidelines that we came up with to deal with problems that might crop up. [ATTACHED] (Madden)

(f) [NO RESPONSE GIVEN] (Haynes)

(g) I think the main concern I would have is how to switch over all your users, if that is necessary. I am not sure how it would work so that you didn't have to switch everyone over. (Gilbert)

(h) We are now running about 7 or 8 lists for our 17 sections. ALA requires that lists on its server have at least two owners, one from the membership and one from staff. Let me know if you wish to proceed and I will take care of everything. Also, if you have more questions, don't hesitate to contact me. (Thompson- I)

(i) I can't think of any other issues to be covered. As I said, we have a number of sections lists running here and haven't had any problems. If you think of other questions, let me know. Also, if you decide to go ahead, let me know (along with who the member owner will be) and I will take care of the paperwork and the list setup. (Thompson - II)

(j) I think having the association step up to the plate and support the WebPages and discussion lists is more than appropriate. It is difficult for everyone involved if the website address changes every 2-3 years and likewise a discussion list! I would recommend a permanent home at ALA. (Paynter)

(k) [NO RESPONSE GIVEN] (Will)

(l) Ask about migrating an existing subscriber list. Also, plan on multiple notices to the list at the old address and the new address to get subscribers used to the new address. If possible have a pointer from the old address for awhile. (Smithee)

Addendum:

[ATTACHMENT FROM RESPONSE 7(e) ABOVE]

Welcome to ULS-L!

This message describes how to use your subscription. Please
keep this message for future reference.

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POSTING MESSAGES

In order to post messages to this discussion list, you MUST send them
from the address recorded for you, which is the address from which you subscribed.

Please do not send command requests (e.g., subscribe/unsubscribe)
to the list. Instead direct them to the ListProc server account:

listproc@ala.org

Message traffic intended for distribution to everyone on the
discussion list should be sent to the list's address:

uls-l@ala.org

PLEASE REVIEW THE ULS-L USAGE POLICY BELOW:
The purpose of ULS-L is to facilitate communication about university librarianship; the Bylaws of the University Libraries Section state that the "primary objectives of the Section shall be (a) to advance university librarianship, university library service, and the development of university libraries in post-baccalaureate degree-granting institutions and (b) to foster cooperation with higher education institutions and university administrators and faculty on issues of mutual concern."

The list serves as a communication mechanism for the University Libraries Section, to let people know about programs and professional development opportunities in ULS and relevant activities in ACRL, ALA, and other professional societies; and to host announcements and discussions of issues related to university libraries. It is not intended as a general library news and information list. Messages sent to this list should relate directly to university libraries, and can include related issues, including position announcements.

ULS asks all subscribers to be courteous. Personal messages, editorializing, messages unrelated to university libraries, messages of a commercial nature, and/or messages critical of a list member or any other person are not permitted. Cross-posting a message from another discussion list is
permitted, as long as it is related to university libraries. Subscribers who repeatedly violate these boundaries will be unsubscribed from ULS-L.

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LIST OWNER(s)

If you have questions or problems, contact the discussion list
owner(s) at either
bruce.henson@library.gatech.edu or
hthompso@ala.org

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UNSUBSCRIBING

Should you desire to unsubscribe from this list in the future,
simply send a message to listproc@ala.org. Include the
"unsubscribe" command in the body of the message, as follows:

unsubscribe ULS-L

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MORE HELP

For more information on using ListProc discussion lists,
use your web browser to view the User Reference Card,

http://www.cren.net/listproc/docs/usercard.html

or send the command HELP on a line by itself in a message to
this ListProc server: listproc@ala.org.