

**Committee Review Task Force
Final Report
September 8, 2014**

Intent

The intent of this report is to present the AALL Executive Board with findings and recommendations to consider as they examine the AALL Standing Committee structure, the volunteer experience within AALL, and other professional association volunteer models.

Purpose, Charge, and Membership

The Committee Review Task Force was appointed by President Steve Anderson in December 2013. Its purpose was to review all AALL standing committees to determine if 1) they are continuing to serve an ongoing strategic purpose or whether their purpose and function has been made operational; and 2) if there are models of association workflow that may be more effective or suitable for fostering member participation and engagement.

The Task Force charge was specifically to:

- 1) Conduct interviews with current and former committee chairs to assess existing and prospective workflow needs.
- 2) Examine the structure of member-volunteer committees of professional associations similar to AALL.
- 3) Identify and evaluate alternative volunteer models for their effectiveness and suitability for fostering participation and engagement by AALL members in all types of employment settings.
- 4) Submit a final report with recommendations.

The Task Force included the following members: Ron Wheeler, chair; Amy Eaton; Roger Skalbeck; Holly Pinto; and Coral Henning. Holly Riccio served as the AALL Board liaison, and Kate Hagan served ex-officio.

Process

The Task Force began its work in January, and five members divided up the 24 AALL standing committees for individual review. Members agreed on a list of questions to ask, and set out to contact two or three past committee chairs for each of their committees. The hope was to gather evaluative information on each committee from current and past committee chairs and from others if necessary. Some of the goals were to:

- 1) discern whether each committee is doing meaningful work that serves a strategic purpose in line with the AALL Strategic Directions
- 2) evaluate the volunteer experience had by committee volunteers
- 3) evaluate whether the proper number and quality of volunteer were being assigned to each committee
- 4) assess the necessity of each committee's existence
- 5) brainstorm alternative ways to do work that seemed unproductive to getting accomplished within the current committee structure

The Task force met several times via conference call to discuss progress throughout the months. In June, the committee met to discuss any problematic committees and to brainstorm ideas about how best to remedy perceived problems. During this call, the committee discussed possible recommendations in a very preliminary way. Following this June call, the committee crafted its report and recommendations mostly via email.

Preliminary Findings

After many conversations with many current and former committee chairs, the Task Force agreed that certain truths had revealed themselves.

Volunteer Experience

It became clear that for many of the AALL standing committees, the volunteer experience was neither rewarding nor enjoyable. Some volunteers reported experiencing frustration and a lack of direction. Other volunteers reported that it was not uncommon for committee members to merely check out and not participate at all. Other committees reported having engaged volunteers who enjoyed the volunteer experience. It became apparent that committees for which the charge contained specific and concrete tasks that clearly contributed to the specified goals of the committee reported volunteer engagement and satisfaction. Committees for which the charge was vague, lacked specific and concrete tasks, or had a perceived disconnect with the goals of the committee, reported volunteer nonparticipation and frustration.

Committee categorization or buckets

The standing committees seemed to fall into five different somewhat loose categories of activities: Advocacy, Awards, Education, Membership, and Publications. The committees with the most issues, or those most in need of evaluation or reworking, fall into the two categories: Membership and Publications. The others seem to be functioning well. Below are the five categories with the committees that fall into each.

ADVOCACY – Committee on Relations with Information Vendors, Copyright, Digital Access to Legal Information, Diversity, Government Relations

AWARDS –AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers, Awards, Grants, Scholarships

EDUCATION - Annual Meeting Program, Continuing Professional Education, Conference of New Law Librarians (CONELL)

MEMBERSHIP – AALLNET, Bylaws and Resolutions, Economic Status of Law Librarians, Leadership Development, Membership Development, Placement, Public Relations, Recruitment to Law Librarianship

PUBLICATIONS – Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals, Indexing of Periodical Literature, Law Library Journal and AALL Spectrum, Price Index for Legal Publications, Research and Publications

Volunteer Assignment and Usage

After analyzing and discussing its findings for each committee, the Task Force agreed that several committees no longer need to exist. However, for some of these same committees, there

are tasks worth completing either every several years or annually. For these remaining tasks a different model of volunteer usage could be warranted.

One such model is discussed in a memo dated June 2, 2014 prepared by Kate Hagan regarding the committee appointment process. The memo details her findings after conducting research on the committee structure of several other associations including the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA), the International Legal Technology Association (ILTA), the Medical Library Association (MLA), the Special Libraries Association (SLA), the Legal Marketing Association (LMA), and the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

Her findings were that AALL is not in line with current best practices in our committee processes and volunteer usage. Most associations have fewer standing committees. Most other association work is done through the formation of task forces based on the year's priorities and in line with the current strategic plan. The memo details what it calls a needs-based approach to committee assignments which facilitates formation of task forces for finite periods of time to complete pithy charges containing very specific tasks. This approach was found to reduce member frustration and facilitate a more rewarding experience for volunteers. Our task force believes that this needs-based approach could be used within AALL to replace some of our more dysfunctional standing committees.

Juries

Our research found that the Medical Library Association's awards, grants, and scholarships committees use juries instead of traditional formal committees for their work. These juries focus on evaluating applicants based on defined criteria in a narrow category, such as a grant or award. There is little to no need for formalities of a traditional committee. We recommend that AALL implement juries as a replacement for several existing committees.

A jury would consist of an odd number of members with a minimum of three and a maximum of seven people appointed annually to administer and select a single award, scholarship, or grant. These juries would be selected as part of the normal committee appointment process. Each jury will have a designated chair, appointed by the AALL Vice-President, when the jury is formed.

Juries would be named after the award, scholarship or grant that they administer. (E.g. LLJ/AALL Spectrum Awards Jury) This should help give context for volunteer contributions in member profiles and when members share and promote their professional activities.

Jury members would serve one-year terms. This will, in the long run, allow many more members to participate than the current standing committee system. It would give many more people the opportunity to feel included, useful, and hooked-in to the Association.

Individual Committee Findings

AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers Committee

The work of this committee is important and rewarding. Volunteers enjoy the experience, and the goals of promoting and rewarding good research and writing are seemingly achieved.

Generating more article submissions should continue to be a committee goal. We recommend that this committee continue as is.

AALLNET Committee

Much of this committee's work has been operationalized. The Director of IT manages the day-to-day operations of the website. The response on the volunteer experience is not positive. The perception is that there is no real work for the committee members to do. There is confusion about the committee's role in relation to the Director of IT. Similar types of associations do not have a member committee conducting website work. Our recommendation is that the committee be disbanded. Tech savvy members should be sought for specific projects or task forces related to AALLNET or other technology based initiatives.

Annual Meeting Program Committee (AMPC)

This committee uses volunteers effectively and provides them with a meaningful and rewarding experience. The committee does a good job of reviewing programming submissions and selecting educational programming. It has been noted that there is a lack of continuity on this committee since each year all new members are appointed. Programming is both essential and fundamental to the association, and the AALL Education Director and the AMPC are experimenting with new ways to solicit input and curate programs that best serve member needs. The AMPC processes are thus a work in progress. The AMPC is highly valued by members. We recommend that the AMPC continue as a standing committee and that it continue to evolve and seek innovative ways to develop programming including steps to improve continuity.

Awards Committee

This committee does useful and relevant work that provides volunteers a worthwhile experience. The committee divides itself into subcommittees each of which administers a different award. This committee's work lends itself nicely to the jury model. We recommend that each award administered by this committee be given to an annually appointed jury to administer. If this is done, the Awards Committee would, as per their current charge, work with the juries to publicize award opportunities and coordinate the presentation of awards to recipients for all awards established by the Association, and oversee the juries and the jury process. It might be wise for each Awards Committee member to serve as an ex officio member of one or more juries. We further recommend that the Awards Committee continue to select the Gallagher Award, the Andrews Award, and the Hall of Fame inductees.

Bylaws and Resolutions Committee

The Bylaws committee is essential and continues to be relevant. There will be an ongoing need to review the bylaws of Chapters and Special Interest Sections. The Bylaw committee has a clear charge and function. This is a committee which may benefit from a flexible membership number depending on the amount of work forecast for the year. Documenting procedures and sharing this with the Chapters and SISs would be useful. Our recommendation is that this committee continue in its current form.

Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV)

CRIV is functioning well and has value to the membership. The CRIV Blog offers writing opportunities for other members and this should be explored further. Finding writers for the blog

and CRIVSheet is difficult. One suggestion was to expand this beyond the committee. Long term existence of the CRIVSheet is in danger due to the difficulty in finding writers. Our recommendation is that this committee continue in its current form. We also recommend that the Executive Board investigate ways to expand the pool of writers for this committee beyond its membership. A task-based approach, or soliciting writers for particular tasks, should be explored. We further recommend that the New Product Award be selected by a jury instead of by CRIV.

Conference of Newer Law Librarians (CONELL)

CONELL volunteers have an excellent experience doing fun and meaningful work. The committee consistently gets 100 attendees at its annual CONELL event. The Dine-arounds get about 60 participants annually. Their focus is on networking and education around the work of the association while getting participants meeting new friends and associates. The committee is functioning well and doing great work. We recommend that this committee continue as is.

Continuing Professional Education

Volunteers are used well, and volunteers are interested and engaged in the work of this committee. We recommend that this committee continue to concentrate on the gathering, evaluation, and selection of educational opportunities for members in close collaboration with the AALL Director of Education. We further recommend that this committee continue to award the CPE grants.

Copyright Committee

The work of this committee is important to the Association and its members. The committee functions well together in conjunction with the Government Relations Office staff. Quick turnaround items can sometimes be challenging at times. We recommend that this committee remain as a standing committee.

Digital Access to Legal Information Committee (DALI)

This committee works well, provides a meaningful experience for volunteers, and provides an important service to the Association. They collaborate well with the Government Relations Office with whom separate roles and duties seem to be adequately defined. They have a State online legal materials multi-year project to create an inventory of primary legal materials all the way down to the County and City level. They monitor every state to see what is “Official”, and they advocate for authentication to preserve information for permanent public access. This committee does important work not only for the association but for the public. The work is getting done and the members are committed and enthusiastic.

Diversity Committee

The work of this committee remains relevant, and members enjoy the volunteer experience doing its work. Our recommendation is that this committee continue its work in its current form and that it continue to select the Minority Leadership Development Award winners.

Economic Status of Law Librarians Committee

Much of the work of this committee is viewed as superfluous by committee members. Interviewees report that volunteers are not used well on this committee. As a result, the volunteer experience is somewhat negative. The committee charge is somewhat vague and

unclear, and the tasks that get completed do not really advance the economic status of law librarians. Therefore, completing tasks is unsatisfying for the volunteers. We recommend that this committee's charge be revised to focus solely on gathering accurate and up-to-date information for the AALL Salary Survey and work contributing to its production. Any other functions or tasks should be evaluated for distribution elsewhere or in a manner outside of the standing committee process.

Government Relations

This committee's work is clearly defined and it works well with the Government Relations Office. Their work is meaningful and relevant to the AALL membership and to the chapters. One concern is that the some members of the GRC feel it should be establishing policy and not the Executive Board. We recommend that this committee remain as is and that it continue to select the Public Access to Government Information Award and the Oakley Award. We further recommend that the Executive Board clarify and reinforce with the GRC the reasons for and the importance of having the Executive Board establishing legislative policy and positions for the Association.

Grants Committee

This committee serves our members well, and provides a meaningful volunteer experience for members. The work of this committee could be achieved using the jury model. We recommend that the work of this committee be assigned to annually appointed juries. If the jury model is adopted, this committee can be disbanded.

Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals Committee

This committee functions well in its current advisory role. It works well with the current IFLP General Editor. However, the editor of IFLP would prefer to have an advisory board with which to work to provide more continuity. We recommend that the editor of IFLP select an advisory board and that this committee be disbanded.

Indexing of Periodical Literature Committee

Volunteers on this committee do a lot of work and require a particular skill set conducive to evaluating and selecting titles for indexing. The LegalTrac product appeals to mainly academic users and this may be cause for some to question its relevance. We recommend that this committee continue as is. We further recommend that the Executive Board periodically evaluate this committee for relevance, return on investment, and for the usefulness of the LegalTrac product.

Leadership Development Committee

The work of this committee remains relevant to the AALL membership, and committee volunteers find its work useful and fulfilling. The committee functions well as is. We recommend that the committee remain intact. We further recommend that the charge be assessed and revised to account for the role that the new online Mentoring Module plays in the mentoring process, and that any mentoring functions assigned to the Membership Development Committee be reassigned to this committee. We also recommend that the Emerging Leader Award be selected by a jury instead of the committee.

Law Library Journal and AALL Spectrum Committee

This committee uses volunteers well, and produces a sense of volunteer satisfaction. Choosing and granting awards for the best articles is worthwhile for member authors and for volunteers. This work could be assigned to annually selected juries which would provide more opportunities for members. We recommend that the Executive Board consider assigning this work to juries and that this committee be sunset. We further recommend that Spectrum select an editorial board like the one LLJ has which would exist outside the committee structure

Membership Development Committee

Much of the work of this committee has been operationalized. The mentoring component continues to be useful, but the Mentoring Module has taken over the mentor assignment function from this committee. We recommend that this committee, in its current form be disbanded. Any of this committee's ongoing mentoring functions should be combined with another committee that deals with mentorship, perhaps Leadership Development.

Placement Committee

The work of this committee has been largely operationalized by the AALL online Career Center. Any remaining tasks are primarily completed by AALL staff. However, there could be other functions useful to members searching for jobs. Things such as in-person or distance resume and cover letter review, advice on interviewing techniques, advice on salary negotiation, etc. We recommend that this committee, in its current form, be sunset. We further recommend that the AALL Executive Board examine and reconstruct the tasks listed in this committee's charge to comport with contemporary member job search needs. Then ad hoc groups or task forces can be appointed to carry out any necessary tasks.

Price Index for Legal Publications Committee

It is unclear whether the work of this committee is still relevant. No one on this task force uses the Price Index or knows of anyone that uses it. The return on investment for this committee is questionable. We recommend that the Executive Board conduct a user analysis to determine whether continued production of the Price Index is worthwhile. If not, we recommend that this committee be disbanded.

Public Relations

Much of this committee's work revolves around administering the Day in the Life and Excellence in Marketing awards. The committee's work writing Spectrum articles does not really promote our profession to external audiences. We recommend that the Day in the Life and Excellence in Marketing awards be administered by annually selected juries. We further recommend that any of this committee's remaining functions be evaluated by the Executive Board for relevance and necessity. Depending on the results of this evaluation and absent necessary work, we recommend that this committee be disbanded.

Recruitment to Law Librarianship Committee

The work of this committee is infrequent, mundane, and doesn't seem to adequately contribute to real recruitment to the profession. Members are disengaged and disinterested. Chairs struggle

with finding things to do. The committee experience for members is not rewarding. The useful work of this committee could be easily operationalized by AALL Headquarters. Our recommendation is that this committee be disbanded, and that the AALL Executive Board examine its charge to assign any useful tasks to Headquarters staff, to the Leadership Development Committee or to another appropriate AALL committee or entity. We further recommend that requests for information about the profession be referred to local chapters for handling.

Research and Publications Committee

This committee administers the LexisNexis Research Grant and the AALL Distinguished Lectureship. There is often, therefore, not much work to do. We recommend that the advertising, solicitation, and administration of the lectureship and the LexisNexis Research Grant be done by separate and annually appointed juries. Without the lectureship and the grant, there would no longer be a need for this committee, so we recommend that it be disbanded.

Scholarships Committee

This committee uses volunteers well, and the volunteer experience is a meaningful one. Some scholarships are often not awarded due to insufficient applications. One significant problem is the lack of uniformity in scholarship criteria from year to year. We recommend that this committee be disbanded and that its work be charged to annually appointed juries. We further recommend that the Executive Board or some other entity establish objective criteria for each scholarship with regard to issues of merit versus need, target scholarship amounts, and number of scholarships to be awarded annually.

Summary Lists

The following lists summarize which committees will continue, which committees will sunset, and which juries will be created.

Standing Committees to Sunset:

AALLNET
Grants
IFLP
LLJ/Spectrum
Membership Development
Placement Committee
Price Index for Legal Publications
Public Relations
Recruitment to Law Librarianship
Research and Publications
Scholarships

Standing Committees to Continue

AALL Call for Papers
Annual Meeting Program Committee
Awards Committee
Bylaws and Resolutions

CRIV
CONELL
CPE
Copyright
DALI
Diversity
Economic Status
Government Relations
Indexing of Periodical Literature
Leadership Development

Juries to be Created

Chapter Professional Development Award
Day in the Life of Contest
Distinguished Lectureship Award
Emerging Leader Award
Excellence in Marketing Award
Innovations in Technology Award
LLJ Article of the Year
Law Library Publications Award
LexisNexis Research Grant
New Product Award
Spectrum Article of the Year Award
Volunteer Service Award
Annual Meeting Grants Awards
Scholarship Awards

Enhancing Volunteer Opportunities

The creation of the juries would allow for an increase in volunteer opportunities of at a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 30 on an annual basis. The range is based on a jury of three or a jury of five, for the following new juries: Chapter Professional Development Award, Emerging Leader Award, Innovations in Technology Award, Law Library Publications Award, New Product Award, and Volunteer Service Award.

In addition, if a jury is created for each LLJ and Spectrum Article of the Year, that would create an additional three to five opportunities.

For the other juries, which are resulting in the sunset of a committee, each year there would be the opportunity for three to five members to serve. Currently, all of those committees have either two or three year terms, which does not provide as many opportunities on an annual basis. This new method will result in more opportunities for more members over a short time span of two to three years.

Our current volunteer ratios for the past five years have been as follows:

	# Volunteered	#Appointed
2008-09:	193	82
2009-10:	180	87
2010-11:	214	82
2011-12:	176	68
2012-13:	186	81
2013-14:	174	70

How this plan to implement juries will be rolled out and communicated to the members is a topic that is beyond the scope of this Task Force.

Overall Volunteer Selection

Beyond the topic of juries, the Task Force encourages the Executive Board to investigate ways to enable member volunteer opportunities outside the recurring appointments cycle. To enable this, it could work well to collect information in members' interests and aptitudes to form a pool of people to contact for either short-term or off-cycle opportunities. This might be to form a task force, an unanticipated project beyond the capacity of an existing committee, or another short-term opportunity. This could be accomplished by allowing members to self-identify, in their AALLNET profiles perhaps, with information on areas of interest. Alternatively, it could work to have people identify their interest in volunteer opportunities beyond the formal committee selection process.

We make no recommendation on specifics for soliciting or storing members' interests and aptitudes. The administration of this, if pursued, will be driven by the mechanics of our member profile system, volunteer forms and other factors.