

# Task Group to Review ELN Advisory Committee Role and Membership

## Recommendations

January 1998

### Context

A continuing ELN objective is to ensure that its governance and organizational structures reflect the broad educational community, promote effective communication among stakeholders, and contribute to sound decision making. Periodic review of these structures allows ELN to be responsive to its changing environment and assures participant libraries of systematic mechanisms for making improvements.

Questions regarding the composition of the ELN Advisory Committee have been raised on a number of occasions during the past three years, in the course of strategic planning as well as during deliberations on ELN communications priorities. At various times there have been requests to consider representation from different libraries, ELN host site systems managers, related library organizations, education technology organizations, and the larger educational community.

At its January 23, 1997 meeting, the ELN Advisory Committee passed the following motion:

*"that a task force be struck to review the role of the ELN Advisory Committee and to recommend its composition, and that the task force include representation from the colleges, universities, public libraries and the ELN."*

### Process

Members of the Task Group included Pat Appavoo (to September 1997), Greg Buss, Deb deBruijn, Brigitte Peter-Cherneff, and Marnie Swanson (from November 1997). Glen Farrell provided additional advice. The Task Group considered these issues:

- various governance models and roles
- communications
- connection to broader education community
- connection to public and other types of libraries
- connection with other resource sharing organizations
- connection with ELN service providers (host sites, etc.)

Draft recommendations were developed and discussed at the November 6, 1997 meeting of the ELN Advisory Committee. The Task Group was subsequently asked to revisit recommendations in light of issues raised and ELN's strategic priorities. The Task Group met in January 1998 and agreed on revisions.

## **Background**

The Terms of Reference and composition of the ELN Advisory Committee were adopted in September 1991, and have remained substantially unchanged since then (see "Management of the Electronic Library Network," attached.) The Terms of Reference specified the Open Learning Agency (OLA) Board as the policy making body for ELN, and the Advisory Committee as a representative group of library constituents, who, along with the ELN Manager, would ensure that the fullest possible consultation with post-secondary libraries and other groups occurs.

As ELN has evolved, however, the roles played by the OLA Board and the ELN Advisory Committee have shifted. While ELN operates under the financial and administrative policy umbrella of the OLA, responsibility for setting ELN service goals and outcomes has been assumed by the Advisory Committee. In this role, the Advisory Committee acts as a quasi board of directors in matters concerning ELN strategic planning, directions and priorities. As such, the Advisory Committee endorses recommendations and takes decisions that ensure the viability of ELN as an organization, and that allow ELN as a whole to achieve strategic goals.

On the other hand, the Advisory Committee continues to operate as originally constituted, i.e. as a representative body of the libraries/organizations served and affected by ELN. In this role, committee members represent the interests and perspectives of their own library and/or type of library, with the Advisory Committee serving as one, but by no means the only forum for consultation and communication with the library community regarding ELN initiatives.

In recent years, ELN's reliance on the Advisory Committee as the primary conduit for communication and consultation with libraries has been reduced as a result of both technological and organizational factors. Email, listservs, and web sites are now used extensively by ELN and other organizations, allowing widespread, direct and ongoing communication/consultation among multiple parties. In addition, strong working relationships between ELN and the library community have been built since ELN's inception. Relationships with groups such as the Council of Post-Secondary Library Directors (CPSLD), the Media Exchange Cooperative (MEC), etc. are now well established, with ELN a regular participant in meetings of these and other library organizations.

### **Issues:**

The Task Group began with the assumption that the role and purpose of the Advisory Committee should drive its composition, and that the size of the committee should not increase (currently sixteen members) if it is to remain effective.

In clarifying the multiple roles that the current Advisory Committee plays, it seemed clear that the emphasis on planning and service policy development has increased, while the focus on operations and activities has decreased or needs to be accomplished in other ways (e.g. meetings with host site system managers, communications with working groups via email, etc.) The Task Group affirmed that ELN must act with the full knowledge and support of constituent libraries if it is to operate successfully. The Task Group therefore concluded that the Advisory Committee

must be constituted in such a way as to build commitment to and ownership of ELN among its library stakeholders.

The Task Group also recognized that if ELN and post-secondary libraries, as a collective, are to operate as a service to the post-secondary education system, that consultation with additional stakeholders and constituents beyond the library community must take place. This can be accomplished most appropriately by ensuring broader input to the ELN annual planning process.

### **Recommendations:**

1. That the nature of ELN's relationship with OLA be clarified, and described more accurately to reflect OLA's role in providing the administrative environment and supporting infrastructure for ELN.
2. That the ELN Advisory Committee be renamed the "ELN Steering Committee," reflecting its primary responsibility to set priorities for ELN's annual plan and to monitor outcomes.
3. That the ELN Steering Committee strengthen its role in planning and service policy development, and draw on operational expertise from outside the committee where required.
4. That ELN ensure meaningful opportunities for representatives from the broader educational community (e.g. members of senior administrators councils, education technology organizations, etc., related library organizations) to provide input to ELN's annual planning process.
5. That representation from CPSLD on the Steering Committee be four members (CPSLD President and three elected representatives).
6. That representation on the Steering Committee from the Association of British Columbia Public Library Directors (ABCPLD) be replaced by regularized communication and consultation in other forums, such as liaison through BCLA and the Library Services Branch, direct reporting to the membership through email and listservs, periodic reporting at ABCPLD meetings, and meetings between post-secondary and public library directors.
7. That representation on the Steering Committee from the Media Exchange Cooperative (MEC) be replaced by regularized communication and consultation in other forums, such as direct communication through email and listservs, liaison through CPSLD, and reporting to the membership at the MEC annual general meetings.
8. That the three major University Libraries (UBC, SFU, UVic) be represented on the Steering Committee, in the person of their institutional librarians, and that in addition any libraries that act as ELN host sites have such representation.
9. That there be one representative on the Steering Committee elected from among the smaller universities.

10. That ELN strengthen and systematize the consultative process with library client groups, service providers, and library sector organizations, through direct, ongoing and broadly-based communication and regular meetings.

11. That the Steering Committee consider, at a future date, additional strategies for ELN to improve consultation and communication, such as provision for a member-at-large on the Steering Committee.

These recommendations would result in the following membership for the Steering Committee:

- 1 President, CPSLD
- 3 Institutional librarians, elected by CPSLD
- 3 University librarians - UBC, SFU, UVic
- 1 University librarian - smaller universities
- 1 Representative of the Library Services Branch
- 1 President, BCLA
- 1 ELN Manager
- 1 OLA officer (chair)
- 1 Representative of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training & Technology (ex officio)

=====

Total: 13 members