

BOARD DOCUMENT



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TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Robyn Frank, Chair, Division Cabinet

DATE: December 5, 2008

RE: Proposed Academic Division

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Directors create the Academic Division.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Members of existing divisions began discussing with the Cabinet Chair a need for an academic division in May 2008 just before the Annual Conference in Seattle.
- While there are academic librarians in every existing division of SLA, the two that seemed to have the most overlap concern were the Education Division and the Business and Technology Division (College and University Business Librarian Section). Scope notes were examined, and open dialogues were initiated to discuss the impact. We announced the possible formation of a new division to the leadership at the Joint Cabinet Meeting in Seattle.
- Since the beginning of this effort, there have been many questions and concerns raised about the establishment of a new Academic Division – most specifically, how it might impact the membership of existing divisions.
 - The current scope note of the Education Division clearly states that they are about the subject of education. They were asked to revisit their scope note to see if they wished to change it. The results of their deliberations: keep the subject focus and slightly revise the scope note to reflect iSchools as well as library education.
 - The Business and Finance Division were initially concerned that an Academic Division would include their “business” librarians. But B&F felt that their CUBLS members were members because of the subject specialty, not the academic function.
- Beyond these two obvious divisions with overlap, there has been a lively discussion about numerous pros and cons to this proposal. Please see Attachment 1 for a listing of these points of concern. In an effort to give members an opportunity to more formally express their concerns (pro and con), we held a “Town Hall Meeting” conference call on Wednesday, November 12, 2008, from 2:00 – 3:00 PM (EST).
- Stacey Greenwell has volunteered to serve as the first Chair of this division if formed. The entire proposed slate of officers has been submitted (see page 5 of Attachment 2).
- 186 members have petitioned for the creation of an Academic Division and have indicated that they will join this division. See the attached petitions starting on page 6 of Attachment 2

(62 members signed the petition in Seattle, 124 have signed the electronic petition – of which 71 have indicated that they are willing to serve in some form of leadership position). Only 100 signatures are required for the Board of Directors to consider the formation of a new division.

- Staff has audited these petitions and 167 are valid members of the association. There were 10 duplicates (signed both petitions), and 9 non-members.
- The scope of the Division is to focus on topics of interest to academic librarians from all subject disciplines. This division is committed to improving the quality of teaching and research at academic institutions by promoting collaborative opportunities between information professionals and the larger academic community. While other divisions are concerned with specific subject areas, the Academic Division covers topics of a general nature relevant to all academic librarians from all subject disciplines, such as:
 - Understanding the special needs of working with diverse groups within the academic community--undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, staff, alumni, community patrons, etc.
 - Collaborating with other campus units in order to build partnerships to strengthen the library and further the strategic direction of the institution
 - Utilizing technology to enhance the user experience in the academic library, such as virtual reference and distance learning technologies
 - Working effectively with campus administration to improve library funding and support
 - Providing opportunities for professional development through both effective programming and networking with other counterparts
 - Enhancing institutional efforts to improve recruitment and retention of students, promoting the ideals of information literacy to the academic community and exemplifying the higher aspirations of academic librarianship and information professionals to both the academic institution and the local community
- The standard governing document has been submitted (see Attachment 2, pages 2-4). Since this is the first and original governing document and has merely modified the name and scope note from the "Model Divisional Governing Document," it does not need to go through the Bylaws Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT: Based on the 167 initial members, the allotment for 2009 will be \$2,004.00 (\$12.00 per member). Revenue would be impacted by current members who wish to affiliate with this new division. A division focused on "academics" will attract new members who are interested in topics of a general academic nature.

Prepared by: Tom Rink

Reviewed by: Robyn Frank, Linda Broussard

ATTACHMENT 1

Academic Division Points of Discussion – Food for Thought

Pros:

- Would allow academic members to belong to just one association (SLA) to get the programming they might have received from ACRL. The cost of joining another division in SLA is much lower than the cost of belonging to an additional association and the added travel cost attending two conferences.
- Marketing opportunity for SLA to add more academic members.
- Strengthens members ability to get funding from their organizations to attend SLA.
- Allows for more general academic programming that would not take away from other subject oriented divisions.
- Facilitates better communication and collaboration across divisions.
- Because an Academic Division in SLA would not be highly bureaucratic, the division would be able to meet the needs of its members in a timely basis.
- The ability to offer programming to address academic issues/concerns (promotion, tenure, publishing, etc.).

Alternative Opinions:

- Do we really need another division?
Concerns over division membership loyalty.
- Concern that we would use the ACRL model, including its bureaucracy.
- Increased meeting conflicts at Annual Conference. There are already too many programming conflicts.
- Concerns that academic librarians would leave the subject divisions and that the “cross fertilization” of people working in a variety of environments would lessen. This is one of the strengths of SLA.
- More competition over limited vendor sponsorship monies.
- Instead of a new division, Form an academic “section” for each division.
- Moves us away from our strength of specialization.
- How would this differ from B&F’s CUBL Section?