

Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability Interim Report, December 2014

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The Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability has been tasked with undertaking an analysis of the current state of LA as Subject and to examine new avenues for sustainable future growth and operation of the organization. This interim report sets out resources that have been identified for further exploration in 2015.

The Ad Hoc Committee has been specifically charged with examining the current relationship between USC and LAAS. This relationship is very strong under the regime of current library dean Catherine Quinlan, but there has been concern within LAAS about what will happen to the organization when and if Dean Quinlan leaves USC. One aspect of particular interest to LAAS is the possibility of its becoming a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, and the Ad Hoc Committee has been tasked with analyzing the pros and cons of such action, in addition to researching the steps necessary to registering as a 501(c)3.

The interim report below is organized into two main sections, along the lines above: Section 1 deals with the analysis of LAAS as an organization and Section 2 reports on possible avenues for a sustainable future for the group. The report lays out an action plan and a roadmap for what the Ad Hoc Committee will be doing in 2015.

Possible Avenues for Assistance

The scope of work the Ad Hoc Committee is proposing for 2015 is relatively large and requires expertise (as well as time) that the Committee members do not have. In order to execute all of the tasks proposed below, the LAAS Ad Hoc Committee is exploring 3 different avenues for assistance: 1. Pepperdine Service Leadership Program, 2. LAAS Residency Program, and 3. USC Master of Management in Library and Information Science (MMLIS) Program.

The Pepperdine Service Leadership class is a required course taken by undergraduate business administration majors in accounting, business, and international business at Pepperdine in which students form consulting teams to serve nonprofit organizations. This class in particular seems perfect to assist us with the analysis of whether or not LAAS should consider becoming a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit. The three LAAS residents for 2014-2015 similarly seem well positioned to help research and write about the history of the organization in preparation for the 20th anniversary of LAAS and the 10 year anniversary of the Archives Bazaar (see below). Similarly, Ad Hoc committee would like to work with USC MMLIS interns to create and administer a survey to LAAS members and researchers on their perceptions of LAAS, the group's future and ideas for sustainability (again, see below for more details).

SECTION 1: ANALYSIS OF LA AS SUBJECT

Analyzing the history, current structure, USC support and other aspects of LAAS as it is currently operating will help to guide decision-making about the organization going forward. Making plans for the future of LAAS requires a firm understanding about the group's history and of its current make-up.

History of LA as Subject

The history of LAAS is complex and involves a large number of players, both individuals and institutions. In discussing the prospect of assembling a comprehensive and authoritative history of the group, the Ad Hoc Committee has realized it may be too large a project for them to undertake alone. As such, the Ad Hoc committee proposes working with LAAS residents (or interns from another library/archive-related program) to research and write about the history of the organization.

A history of LAAS in conjunction with research related to the future and sustainability of the organization will help create a complete picture. It also seems appropriate given the upcoming 20th anniversary of LAAS and the 10th anniversary of the Archives Bazaar. The history should trace key developments including: the original Getty initiative, the annual Archives Bazaar, relationship with USC, creation of Website, establishment of the Executive Committee and LAAS Coordinator, internship program, and the creation of the charter and strategic plan.

Resources for researching the history of LAAS include the group archives at USC, the group's website(s) and group members.

The website for the original LA as Subject initiative still exists and contains information on the goals, related exhibitions, events, contributors, and publications (http://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/events/lasubject/overview.html). In addition the current LAAS Website contains information on the history, key documents including the Charter, Strategic Plan, the USC/LAAS joint memorandum, and Executive Committee meeting minutes dating back to 2004.

An essential part of researching the history of LAAS is talking to members current and past who have helped to shape the organization and can shed light on its development. The following individuals were identified as experts to interview for historical context, but is not an exhaustive list by any means:

- Kenn Bicknell, Executive Committee Chair, 2013-2015
- Phil Ethington, USC professor, Member, Executive Committee, LA as Subject Archives Forum, 2002-2008
- Tyson Gaskill, USC Libraries, Getty Forum and currently involved with Archives Bazaar
- Robert Marshall, Getty Forum Chair, 1996-1999, also involved post-Getty
- Cynni Murphy, retired librarian from Santa Monica Public Library, involved with the

Getty Forum

- Liza Posas, LA as Subject Coordinator, current
- Karen Stokes, Getty Research Institute, Project Manager, LA as Subject Getty Forum

In addition to a historical narrative, recommendations for the permanent retention of the LAAS archives should be addressed. How will archival records be collected, where will they be retained, and who has the responsibility? Records include, but are not limited to: meeting minutes, reports, planning documents, election data, calendars, grant proposals, correspondence, outreach materials, and photographs.

Member and Researcher Surveys

The Ad Hoc Committee suggests using surveys of LAAS members and researchers/users to gain a fuller picture of how LAAS is meeting the needs of its members, how it is perceived by them and by researchers, and how it can better deliver services. Getting a better sense of what members and constituent groups see as LAAS's strengths, weaknesses and potentials can help to guide future planning going forward. Executing these surveys may be an appropriate task for interns from the USC MMLIS Program (for example) to take on. Information gleaned from these surveys will become a part of the Ad Hoc Committee's final report in 2015.

Though the LAAS Executive Committee has undertaken surveys of the membership in the past, the Ad Hoc Committee also feels strongly that a survey of researchers working on LA history would be beneficial. The methodology for finding such people to survey has not been determined but polling both LAAS Research Members and scholars currently unaffiliated with LAAS would be useful and would help determine how well we are serving this important constituent group.

Evaluation of 2013-2015 Strategic Plan

The LA as Subject Strategic Plan set out three Strategic Directions to shape LAAS from 2013-2015. It includes specific supporting activities for each Direction and an outline of the membership structure.

Strategic Direction #1: LA as Subject will develop resources and foster collaborative projects of value for members to share and promote their collections and historical knowledge online.

Strategic Direction #2: LA as Subject will focus on building relationships with information seekers, research communities and regional groups.

Strategic Direction #3: LA as Subject will build membership and facilitate member participation by expanding the LA as Subject infrastructure and programs beyond bi-monthly meetings.

Membership

Membership is outlined as including Archive Members, Research Members, and Student Chapter Members. Archive Members and Research Members are part of the current fabric of

LAAS, but Student Chapter Members as defined are not fully realized yet. Archive Members are the most active participants in LAAS activities.

LAAS' role as a catalyst for collaboration appears to be one of its greatest strengths. In Strategic Direction #1 collaborative endeavors are identified as key and Strategic Direction #2 centers on building relationships between different constituencies. The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant to develop a residency program supporting archival education brought together LAAS members Cal State University Northridge, the Autry, and USC Libraries. Funding from Cal Humanities enabled LAAS and USC Libraries to create a series of short documentary films profiling four LAAS collectors "who turned their private obsession into a public resource." On a smaller scale, LAAS talk/shops (panel discussions with practical workshop-style advice) tapped into the expertise of a diverse array of LAAS members who shared their knowledge with other LAAS members. These accomplishments all fit into elements of the Strategic Plan. Their success demonstrates that LAAS functions well as a means to bring member organizations together outside of their individual institutional walls to work toward achieving common goals.

Many LAAS Strategic Direction support activities were achievable due to USC Libraries resources and structure. If LAAS is no longer affiliated with USC Libraries, future strategic plans will have to make careful consideration of past accomplishments and evaluate whether these would be achievable at the same scale if LAAS operated independently. It would be helpful to determine a way to measure the impact of successful strategic plan related activities and to determine the road blocks that held up the implementation of other support activities. This will assist with envisioning LA as Subject's future sustainability and potential under different operating conditions.

SWOT Chart

The Ad Hoc Committee created the following SWOT chart (showing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) as a starting point to analyze LAAS. This is a working document, to be revised throughout the Ad Hoc Committee's process, and will be used in the potential collaboration with the Pepperdine University Graduate Business School (see below).

| Internal | |
|---|---|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unique independent membership organization 2. Annual Archives Bazaar that attracts hundreds 3. 6 member meetings annually and workshops/resources 4. Website which researchers around the world use to identify relevant archival collections. 5. Strong leadership as shown | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Larger membership involvement outside of annual Bazaar 2. Dependence on USC to fund our major annual Archives Bazaar event and the part time LAAS Coordinator position 3. Financial constraints 4. Staffing: we don't have someone devoted 100% to LAAS. It's only one half-time employee and |

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|--|---|
| <p>through executive committee and strategic plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Relationship with USC 7. Promotion of the study of Los Angeles history | <p>volunteers.</p> |
| External | |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build LAAS programs beyond bi-monthly meetings 2. Increase parternships and relationships with research communities, regional groups, and the public 3. Increase web tools to share collections and resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long-term sustainability 2. Loss of funding |

SECTION 2: RESEARCH FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

501(c)3 Analysis

The question of whether LAAS should become a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization has been discussed many times in recent years by the membership and Executive Committee. LAAS could potentially apply to be a 501(c)3 as an association with an exempt purpose. To apply as an association it is required to have a written and dated document signed by at least two individuals that recognizes the organization's creation, such as articles of association.

The application requires financial statements for the current year and two preceding years with detailed breakdowns of revenue and expenses. As LAAS does not currently operate as financially independent we would need to investigate how such statements would take shape. LAAS does not collect membership dues or charge members or the public for meetings, educational activities, or the Archives Bazaar. Becoming a 501(c)3 would require establishing a financial accounting system for the organization and likely would require hiring a certified public accountant.

501(c)3 organizations are limited in “how much political and legislative (lobbying) activities they may conduct.” Would this impact the organization’s ability to advocate on behalf of member organizations?

The 501(c)3 designation centers on the financial elements of an organization and appears to be most useful to LAAS if the organization operates independently of the financial support of other organizations. Once incorporated LAAS becomes the holder of debts and liabilities related to the organization. Becoming a 501(c)3 may require hiring legal representation.

Serious 501(c)3 consideration of this option for LAAS’ future would benefit from further exploration as part of the Pepperdine Service Leadership Program. Expertise in this matter is outside of the realm of the Ad Hoc Committee’s knowledge and the Pepperdine Service Leadership Project seems like a fantastic (and free) resource to help us begin our decision-making process. The Committee submitted an application to the Pepperdine Service Leadership Project on December 1, 2014 and is still waiting to hear if the application has been accepted. The Service Leadership class, known as BA598, is a required course taken by undergraduate business administration majors in accounting, business, and international business at Pepperdine. The course is designed to blend academic study with community service. In the course the students form consulting teams to serve nonprofit organizations by applying business concepts and skills to mutually agreed upon projects.

In the application, the Ad Hoc Committee requested that the Pepperdine students weigh the pros and the cons of LAAS becoming a non-profit. If they recommend that LAAS become a non-profit, they will outline procedures on the various steps required to become a registered non-profit. The students will present their findings and recommendations in a report and also at a LAAS meeting at the project’s conclusion.

Others to consult in this area are professional consultants like those at the Center for Nonprofit Management (this will require a fee), as well as leadership of organizations similar to LAAS who have become 501(c)3s.

Similar Organizations

As just hinted above, analysis of and conversation with organizations similar to LAAS could also be beneficial during this process. Organizations that have become registered nonprofits – as well as other organizations who have decided against this step – are likely to have interesting and instructive lessons for LAAS as we consider a similar step. Because LAAS represents an unusual membership model, it is actually somewhat difficult to find organizations that are analogous in structure and membership. The following table summarizes information on some like organizations that have so far been identified by the Ad Hoc Committee.

| <u>Organization name</u> | <u>Other information</u> |
|---|---|
| LA Heritage Alliance | membership group of heritage groups (both volunteer-based and professionally-staffed) (http://laheritage.blogspot.com/) |
| International Organization of Jewish Genealogical Societies | 501(c)3; association of regional non-profits; members pay dues based on number of members at local level (see bylaws http://www.iajgs.org/blog/about/iajgs-bylaws/) |
| CA Association of Nonprofits | "The California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits) is a statewide membership organization that brings nonprofits together to advocate for the communities we serve." Supported by grant funding and by membership dues based on members' budgets. Provides insurance & risk management services as well as other development help and administrative guidance. (http://calnonprofits.org/about-us/about-calnonprofits) |
| Conference of CA Historical Societies | "CCHS helps historians, and others who are interested in California history, to connect and share information -- joining efforts to preserve records, artifacts, sites and buildings. CCHS also helps local societies and small museums with management, acquisition, preservation and restoration techniques." membership for individuals & for organizations. Yearly (?) conference/symposium. (http://www.californiahistorian.com/) |

LAAS Partnerships

In addition to exploring the 503(c) 3, status, the Ad Hoc Committee feels it is worth exploring additional partnerships with other institutions as possible options for support. Any new potential relationships would not necessarily replace support provided by the USC Libraries, but could enhance or create new types of additional support. It is also important to analyze the current relationship with USC and these other potential partnerships should the USC Libraries change its commitment to LAAS under new or different leadership.

The central issue is what resources LAAS needs in order to fulfill its mission from the very basic, to larger programmatic goals like those described in the Strategic Plan. At the most basic, LAAS requires support for its website, hosting for its listserv and places to hold meetings. No matter what level of support the organization has, it remains important to meet the goals set forth in the Mission and Strategic Plan, and they are:

1. Improve visibility of and access to archives with Los Angeles focused collections through such activities as publishing collection information via its online LA as Subject database and website
2. Promote services to archives with LA focused collections on such issues as preservation, documentation, exhibition, fundraising, and public outreach
3. Advocate for the interests of archives with LA focused collections through outreach to professional and educational organizations whose activities affect the well-being of member archives
4. Expand research on Los Angeles by encouraging researchers of all backgrounds to use member archives, and by helping to develop new collections

The USC Libraries provides resources and personnel related to planning and outreach that fall under some of these goals. The below is not an exhaustive list of resources and the Ad Hoc Committee will continue to research what other resources and benefits USC allocates to LAAS:

- Staff of the Planning & Communications Department, USC Libraries (this includes Tyson Gaskill & Patty Johnson who help manage the Archives Bazaar as well as writer Nathan Masters & coordinator Liza Posas)
- Bill Dotson, Director of Grants & Research Communications, USC Libraries
- USC Libraries web team
- funding and space for Archives Bazaar and other meetings

In addition, many organizations have partnered with LAAS to help fulfill the goals by hosting general membership meetings and workshops (more basic needs), and by hosting the LAAS Residency Interns (more complex programmatic goals). Continuing to foster the relationships that allow for both of these different kinds of collaborations is key to sustaining future growth for LAAS.

When seeking new partnerships, the following questions could be addressed:

- What other projects, activities, events, etc. (that fall under the strategic initiatives) could benefit from additional support (that is, non-USC support), and what are potential partner institutions?
- Are there possibilities for new partners to collaborate with USC on existing support, such as hosting the Archives Bazaar?
- If USC funding was decreased, how would LAAS move forward and plan to partner with a new institution? What goals and programs are essential to LAAS's mission and what programs could be curtailed if such a transition were necessary?