

**ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL AND SMALL LIBRARIES (ARSL)
STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING RESULTS**

January 30 & 31, 2007 – Clarion University, Clarion Pennsylvania

Background

Carla Lehn, California State Library staff person working on California's Rural Library Initiative, was given the opportunity to speak at the September 2006 ARSL conference. Her topic included the concept of "Assets Based Community Development," which suggests that we collaborate with other organizations interested in serving rural libraries, thus sharing scarce resources to create a synergistic approach. Because it was experiencing some stressful times with the unexpected loss of its President, and the need to possibly begin separating itself from the administrative support it has enjoyed from Clarion University, the ARSL board approached Carla about a possible Board position. Because of staffing changes at the California State Library, and thus the time Carla might have available, California State Librarian Susan Hildreth instead proposed that ARSL consider using Carla as their "organizational development consultant." The result was a two day strategic planning retreat in January, 2007.

Strategic Planning Meeting Participants

Ken Davenport (ARSL Board)
Consultant
NE Iowa Library Service Area

Rebecca T. Miller,
Executive Editor, Features and Web
Library Journal

Becky Heil (ARSL Board)
Director
Dubuque (IA) County Library System

Emily Parker, Program Officer
U.S. Library Program
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

*Patty Hector, Deputy Director
North Bay (CA) Cooperative Library System

John Phillip, Library Services Consultant
Westerville Ohio

Susan Hill, Director
Paulding County (OH) Carnegie Library

James M. Rancilio, Director
Sanford (MI) Memorial Library

Carla Lehn, Library Programs Consultant
Rural Library Initiative
California State Library

Donald B. Reynolds, Jr. (ARSL Board)
Director, Nolichucky Regional Library (TN)

Jim Malzewski,
Project Coordinator
Rural Library Sustainability Project
WebJunction

Bernard Vavrek, Director
Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship
Clarion University, Pennsylvania

*Mary Pasek Williams (ARSL Board)
Director, Towanda (IL) District Library

** ill and unable to participate*

VISIONING -- IT'S JANUARY 2012 – WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED?

Priority/(#Votes)

- 1 (17) ARSL is an independent self-funded 501 (c) (3) organization with a strong Board and staff.
- 2 (13) ARSL has a consistent, systematic, staffed membership system.
- 3 (11) Rural Libraries journal and the Rural Library Services Newsletter are provided as benefits of ARSL membership.
- 4 (10) 100% of membership has high-speed access to our online resources.
- 5 (9) ARSL brings real value to rural libraries – innovation, fresh ideas and practical strategies.
- 6 (9) The entire library community is aware of ARSL as a result of aggressive marketing efforts.
- 7 (8) ARSL has strong partnerships with other national library and non-library organizations. (e.g., ALA; PLA; USDA; National Association of Counties; rural health; rural economic development; Rural Sociological Society.)
- 8 (7) ARSL is the spokesperson – the “one clear voice” – for rural libraries.
- 9 (6) We have successfully reached out to rural library trustees as members of the association.
- 10 (5) ARSL is a clearinghouse for opportunities and programs going on in/for rural libraries. “One stop shop for all things rural”
- 11 (5) Attendance at ARSL conferences has increased dramatically due to an emphasis on regional conferences.
- 12 (5) ARSL has a strong on-going relationship with the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship (CSRL) and with Dr. Vavrek’s “Mentee” (good succession planning has taken place) as well as its Advisory Committee.
 - (4) ARSL has membership from every state.
 - (4) ARSL has regional representatives on its Board, which coincide with the 4 USDA Regional Centers for Rural Development.
 - (4) Our survey of state and regional Continuing Education opportunities has guided our work.
 - (3) ARSL publishes a regular e-newsletter.
 - (3) ARSL has successful national partnerships/voice/seat at the table at ALA and PLA.

- (2) We are strategic in how we've introduced the Association to "the masses:" Both "bottom up" (directly to the potential members) and "top down" (demonstrate to state librarians, regional system staff and other key players the worth of the association and of their rural libraries belonging to it). Also partner with COSLA, Regional Systems and State Library and Regional Continuing Education staff.
 - (2) ARSL has a scholarship fund for continuing education.
 - (2) Together with Webjunction, ARSL is proud of our 2 publications: (1) wiki/checklist for public librarians; and (2) wiki on rural library policies
 - (1) ARSL is a member-driven organization – the Membership sets the direction.
 - (1) ARSL has a significant, active virtual presence.
 - (1) We're very proud of ARSL's advocacy for rural library salaries.
 - (1) ARSL partners with Connectivity coordinators at State Libraries.
 - (1) Non-library partners appreciate programs we do about libraries at their conferences.
 - (1) ARSL has an established network of available experts in each state available to refer members for help with local rural challenges.
- There is an updated directory of libraries serving 25,000 or less and we have invited them all to join ARSL. (NOTE: NCES data -- state library and regional staff have this information.
 - ARSL has advocated for University accreditation standards to include public library classes.
 - "LAMA – like" publications and handbooks are available to members.
 - We are advocates for on-going 100% high-speed bandwidth/connectivity
 - Rural libraries are now used as test markets for the latest technology. They are the "Beta testers," and get free stuff for doing it.
 - We are proud of our index of Rural Libraries and the Rural Library Services Newsletter (and other publications?)
 - ARSL's listserv is very active.
 - ARSL has local chapters.
 - ARSL has excellent resources for students on its website.
 - ARSL has a mentoring program (e.g., a small college community library available to help another small college community library.)
 - ARSL published a fabulous "festschrift" at Dr. Vavrek's national retirement party.

What Assets does ARSL have to help Accomplish its Priorities?

- ARSL Website and Listserv
- Growing support of state libraries and regional systems.
- ALA and PLA and their Rural Committees and Staff (Satia Orange, Carol Barta)
- Virtual Training Resources abound!
- Our niche – we’re not ALA or PLA – we are small and can have real, intimate relationships with our members.
- Current member commitment plus large, diverse potential membership base
- Support of the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship (CSRL) at Clarion
- Rural is “Hot” – lots of organizations currently trying to help/figure out, but having a hard time doing that. (Gates commitment is largely rural; WebJunction; California’s Rural Initiative and other state efforts, to name a few)
- There is a listserv of State Library rural staff resources and also of state library and regional continuing education staff.
- The public wants libraries and families who care about libraries are moving to rural areas and want up to date technology and resources.
- The Rural Sustainability Project’s definition of “rural building” has helped to further define our constituent group.
- The ARSL conference has a 25 year history, AND there are already rural library conferences in some states (e.g., MI, IN)
- Gates, WebJunction and Library Journal at our planning table! And others here have lots of experience and commitment.
- Two publications – Rural Libraries and Rural Library Services Newsletter – including partial on-line archive of both, and capability to archive more.
- Rural Libraries are community centers.
- Rural library staff are talented and dedicated.
- Library Journal’s “Best Small Library in America” Award and its 3 winners
- There’s a real need for a rural library association – many feel isolated and want a network.
- Rural Libraries have partnerships with schools.

What Challenges does ARSL Face to Accomplishing its Priorities?

- Rural communities face major funding challenges. One example is Gates' "if you give it, they will upgrade" dream has not materialized yet in many rural places.
- Continuing support from the Center for the study of Rural Librarianship – Need to sever relationship with Clarion University within 1 – 2 years, and plan for Bernie Vavrek's eventual retirement.
- Funding challenges for the Association – our members and their libraries have funding challenges that will impact us. How much can our Membership dues realistically be?
- The size of our current planning group is small and the time they will have available to help will be a challenge. We will need help, and will need to create entry-level and larger opportunities for the membership to get actively involved in order to gain the intensity of connection to the association that will be required.
- "Why a separate organization for Rural and Small Libraries" will be a question we'll be asked repeatedly. We need to be prepared to answer it.
- Should the Association include not just public libraries? How to/should we bring in other library groups? – American Indian Library Association, Schools, other?
- We don't yet know the compelling value added of the Association for our potential membership base.

IS THERE A NEED FOR A SEPARATE ORGANIZATION FOR RURAL LIBRARIES? OR COULD THESE GOALS BE ACHIEVED ANOTHER WAY?

- Historically there has been no real avenue for rural libraries to participate in the traditional organizations (ALA/PLA) because:
 1. Rurals are generally not members of ALA/PLA because they can't afford the dues (NOTE: Cost of one year of ALA, PLA, State Association and ARSL dues is almost \$350 before even one step out the door to any conference is taken)
 2. They do not attend conferences – Can't afford travel costs from their remote locations and can't afford time off required for travel, when they are often the only library staff members or one of a very small staff. Library would have to close.
 3. Little continuing education of interest to rural/small libraries is available at these traditional conferences – Presenters often “don't speak our language”
- There is a real need to connect/share the state and regional resources that are being developed for rural and small libraries
- There are truly specialized needs of this target audience – they are isolated in many ways: geographically (including often no local transportation systems in rural areas) and often a very diverse socioeconomic group to serve
- They need a lower membership fee
- Rural libraries are often “one person shops,” which means they require multiple competencies and leaving for conferences may require library closure
- This is a specialized audience – some move in “baby steps” in continuing education – often difficult to get them to leave town for the day (again, cost, travel time, library closure required) and vast majority have no formal library education
- Socioeconomic indicators are great in rural areas
- Diversity is new in rural areas
- They need technology help at all levels, including accessing local funding to maintain what they have.
- Digital divide is real in rural communities.
- Anyone can gain something from conference programs aimed at Rural Small libraries; the reverse is not true. Conference programs aimed at large libraries often not helpful to the rurals
- Could we be an ALA Division? – probably not because our members can't afford to join or attend conferences, and that would therefore not meet our stated need to network/educate our target audience. However, we may want to consider affiliation with ALA

ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL AND SMALL LIBRARIES (ARSL)
STRATEGIC PLAN
(January, 2007)

ARSL MISSION: The Mission of the Association for Rural and Small Libraries is to provide a network of people and materials to support rural and small library staff, volunteers and trustees to integrate the library thoroughly with the life and work of the community it serves.

STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2007 – 2010

1. Establish ARSL as an independent self-funded 501 (c) (3) organization with strong board and staff
2. Develop a consistent, systematic, staffed membership system.
3. Provide the journal Rural Libraries and the Rural Library Services Newsletter as benefits of ARSL membership.
4. Work to ensure that 100% of our membership (and all rural libraries) have high-speed access to online resources.
5. Ensure that ARSL brings real value to rural libraries -- innovation, fresh ideas and practical strategies.
6. Employ aggressive marketing strategies to ensure that the entire library community is aware of ARSL and its role.
7. Ensure that ARSL has strong partnerships with other national library and non-library organizations. (e.g., ALA; PLA; USDA; National Association of Counties; rural health; rural economic development; Rural Sociological Society.)
8. Establish ARSL as the spokesperson – the “one clear voice” – for rural libraries.
9. Reach out to rural library trustees to be part of the Association.
10. Establish ARSL as a clearinghouse for opportunities and programs going on in and for rural libraries. (“One stop shop for all things rural”)
11. Dramatically increase attendance at ARSL conferences by emphasizing regional conferences.
12. Ensure ARSL has a strong on-going relationship with the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship (CSRL) and with Dr. Vavrek’s “Mentee” (good succession planning has taken place) as well as its Advisory Committee.

ARSL COMMITTEE WORKPLANS FOR 2007

ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

2007 WORK PLAN

Committee Charge:

- **Strategic Goal #1:** Establish ARSL as an independent self-funded 501 (c) (3) organization with strong Board and Staff.
(NOTE: ARSL must be independent of Clarion University within 1 – 2 years.)

(NOTE: It is understood that this Task Force will disband when its work is done. It may, however, “morph” into an on-going Board Development/Governance committee.

Committee Members: current Board/Planning Group – Ken Davenport, Don Reynolds, Mary Pasek Williams, Becky Heil and Bernie Vavrek. (Carla Lehn as “coach/task master”)

Tasks for 2007:

1. By mid-February, 2007, Becky Heil, Treasurer, will investigate establishment of ARSL bank account separate from Clarion University into which any new membership revenue may be deposited. This may include investigation of a fiscal agent.
2. By mid-February, 2007, Lehn, Miller and Heil will conference call about pro bono attorney and fiscal agent research findings. Identify/recruit a pro bono attorney to help shape by-laws and file the 501 (c) (3) application. (Note: IF ARSL funds must be used to pay an attorney, they will need to come from the new account identified in #1 above.)
3. By mid-February, Davenport and Reynolds will revise Mission statement for Board approval to use in IMLS application due March 1.
4. By April, 2007 appoint members to Membership, Program and Publications, and Marketing and Partnerships Committees so they can begin their 2007 work.
5. With attorney’s help, identify what state to incorporate in.
6. Davenport and Reynolds will draft by-laws, with input from attorney, for Board approval in time for 501 (c) (3) application.
7. By October, 2007, Heil will work with Vavrek to “zero out” ARSL’s Clarion University account through payment of conference and other expenses.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

2007 WORK PLAN

Committee Charge:

- Strategic Goal #2: Develop a consistent, systematic, staffed membership system.
- Strategic Goal #6: Marketing activities related to membership recruitment.
- Strategic Goal #9: Reach out to rural library trustees for membership.

Committee Members: ???????

Tasks for 2007:

1. For the short term, Vavrek and grad students will send renewal invoices as memberships become due, with funds to be deposited in new ARSL account once established by the Treasurer. Renewal invoices should include a reminder about the 2007 conference and a brief update on changes that will be forthcoming as a result of our January 2007 planning meeting.
2. Beginning now, Vavrek and grad students will maintain lapsed members in database so they can be contacted later.
3. Vavrek and students work to get ARSL membership brochures (current ones until new ones are ready) into the Rural and Small Library Conferences in Indiana (April 12-13); Michigan (May 7-9) (help from Rancilio) and ALA Rural Meeting (help from Malzewski) (June 21).
4. By June 30, 2007, current Board/Planning Group will determine how future membership renewals will be handled – renew on the member's anniversary date of joining? OR all memberships due on Calendar Year or Fiscal Year basis.
5. By June 30, 2007, current Board/Planning Group will determine cost of ARSL membership when jointly registering for the conference.
6. Once initial new member benefits (i.e., Rural Libraries and Rural Library Services Newsletter negotiations) and membership dues amount are determined, design new membership brochure that articulates benefits. By June 2007? – *NOTE: this assumes doing some research on member needs and interests – what would bring them to join and how much will they/can they pay? But we will not hold up the current new membership process waiting on the full blown research.*
7. Membership Committee will create a Strategic Recruitment plan to propose to the Board by September 1, 2007. Plan will address these issues:
 - Which of our assets do we use to help recruit public and tribal library members and in what order/what timeframe? (State Libraries, Regional Library Systems, other?)
 - Who do we invite in as members beyond public libraries? (e.g., academics, schools) Should we even “go there?? And if so, when?

CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

2007 WORK PLAN

Committee Charge:

- Strategic Goal #11: Dramatically increase attendance at ARSL conferences by emphasizing regional conferences.

Committee Members: John Phillip, Bernie Vavrek, Mary Pasek Williams, Don Reynolds, and “consultant” Rebecca Miller

Tasks for 2007:

1. Prepare for annual conference that’s already been scheduled for Wednesday through Friday September 26 – 28, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in Columbus Ohio.
2. Work with John’s initial draft agenda, considering the following:
 - Add some of the “Big Bang” ideas/presenters identified at January planning meeting (use Becky Miller as “consultant” as needed)
 - Consider reducing the number of break-out sessions to accommodate these additional “Big Bang” presenters
 - Consider hosting lunches for focus group sessions on topics of interest to ARSL planning group (e.g., “value added” for membership; regional conference approach)
3. Include discussion of feasibility of regional conference approach at 2007 conference (plenary session or focus group lunches or both?)
4. Present revised conference agenda to Board/Strategic Planning Group by Mid-February, 2007.
5. Prepare and distribute conference brochure by _____when???? Include 20% conference discount for ARSL members, and opportunity to join ARSL at reduced cost when registering for conference.
6. By March, 2007, Lehn share conference dates and California and other states’ plan to send rural library staff on State Library Rural Staff listserv.
7. By September 2007, begin discussions with potential partner(s) for first regional conference.

PROGRAMS AND PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

2007 WORK PLAN

Committee Charge:

- Strategic Goal # 3: Provide Rural Libraries journal and the Rural Library Services Newsletter as benefits of ARSL membership.
- Strategic Goal # 5: Ensure that ARSL brings real value to rural libraries – innovation, fresh ideas and practical strategies.
- Strategic Goal # 10: Establish ARSL as a clearinghouse for opportunities and programs going on in and for rural libraries. (“One stop shop for all things rural”)

Committee Members: ????????

Tasks for 2007:

1. By Mid-February Board meeting, Vavrek and Susan Hill crunch numbers to identify the cost of adding Rural Libraries (current subscription is January – December and is \$20 for 2 hard copy issues mailed) and the Rural Library Services Newsletter (current subscription is also January – December and is \$30 for 6 hard copy issues mailed) as member benefits.
2. By March, Board determines whether or not to add both publications as member benefits based on cost, as well as how to provide access – hard copy/on-line/both?
3. Who ??? By when??? provide online access to back issues of all Rural Libraries not currently on-line, and all issues of Rural Library Services Newsletter back to 2005.
4. By mid-February, Malzewski will investigate the feasibility of utilizing the WebJunction Community Partner program for ARSL’s website/clearinghouse for “all things rural.” Considerations in this discussion will include: ARSL’s existing website; “rural face;” and cost, including on-going maintenance.
5. For the short term, continue ongoing use of ARSL listserv as is through Clarion University. Consider ways to utilize member expertise to moderate and/or ask questions on the list in order to engage members in discussion on topics of interest. By 2008, have a plan to transition listserv away from the University.
6. By September, begin discussion of creation of online digital library to collect “all things rural” (e.g., publications/events/activities/links). Recommend to the board if stored on ARSL website, whether these materials should be password protected or not.

MARKETING & PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

2007 WORK PLAN

Committee Charge:

- Strategic Goal # 4: Work to ensure 100% of membership has high-speed access to our online resources.
- Strategic Goal # 6: Employ aggressive marketing activities to ensure that the entire library community is aware of ARSL and its role.
- Strategic Goal # 7: Ensure ARSL has strong partnerships with other national library and non-library organizations. (e.g., ALA; PLA; USDA; National Association of Counties; rural health; rural economic development; Rural Sociological Society.)
- Strategic Goal # 8: Establish ARSL as the spokesperson – the “one clear voice” – for rural libraries.
- Strategic Goal # 12: Ensure ARSL has a strong on-going relationship with the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship (CSRL) and with Dr. Vavrek’s “Mentee” (good succession planning has taken place) as well as its Advisory Committee.

Committee Members: ????????

Tasks for 2007:

1. By March, Susan Hill will write and submit press releases about our January planning meeting to the ARSL listserv, Publib, Library Journal, American Libraries, Rural Library Services Newsletter and AL Direct.
2. By March, Reynolds will use Hill’s press release to draft a letter for board approval to State Librarians and CE staff. It will ask them to forward the letter to Regional Systems. Letter will include September, 2007 conference dates and will encourage them to send rural library staff and trustees to it.
3. By April, Board will consider whether or not to send a revised letter to the four USDA Regional Centers.
4. At ALA in June, 2007, Vavrek will hold inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee Members for the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship. As requested, all will assist in identification and/or recruitment of potential members.
5. By August, 2007, draft a plan to create additional national library and non-library partnerships.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLYING FOR IMLS COLLABORATIVE PLANNING GRANT

VOLUNTEERS:

Applicant/Fiscal Agent:	California State Library Foundation
Principal Grant writer:	Carla Lehn
IMLS contact:	Carla will ask Susan Hildreth
Narrative Help:	Susan Hill
Demographics:	Bernie Vavrek
Tech Stuff:	Jim Malzewski
Internet Access Data:	Emily Parker
ALL:	Provide Carla with language about their involvement.

Things to ask for:

- Feasibility study for ARSL -- What do rural libraries need? How do we meet the need? What does it cost? What can/will they pay?
- Test regional conference and other value added ideas to assess total scope of ARSL product. – Idea: try first regional conference in collaboration with CSL in CA?
- Funds for second tier/second year of planning and implementation – includes second year planning group meeting(s) to take the next steps. -- \$5,000 each
- COST SHARING = ARSL costs of planning meeting \$5,000 + \$1000/day for each of us (4 days includes travel); grad student assistant costs for the year -- \$5,000 . . . what else?
- Cost of first year underwriting of addition of the Journal and the Newsletter as benefits in order to not have to increase membership yet?
- Collect rural materials to make available digitally
- Meetings with potential national library and non-library partners about the future
- Initial costs of being a “Community Partner” on WebJunction??
- Costs for attorney for filing non-profit status and/or to investigate fiscal agent option
- Funds to up-load all back issues of Rural Libraries and Rural LibraryServices Newsletter
- Consultant/staffing costs for the project?

NEXT STEPS

By When	Who	Does What?
2/15	Carla	Hold conference call with the two Beckys re: Attorney/Fiscal Agent
2/15	Carla	Get Board Meeting Conference Call Date & Create Board Agenda
2/15	Bernie/Don	Work out conference call plans
2/15	Becky Heil	Investigate ARSL Bank Account separate from the University
2/15	Jim M.	Investigate feasibility of using WebJunction Community Partnership for ARSL's website/clearinghouse for potential use in IMLS Grant
2/15	EVERYONE	Let Carla know if your org can/will be IMLS grant partner
2/20	Don/Ken	Revise ARSL Mission Statement for Board Approval (see group suggestions typed on Organization Chart)
2/20	Conference Cmte	Revise conference agenda -- see Conference Committee Workplan)
2/10	Bernie/Susan	Crunch numbers to identify cost of adding publications to ARSL membership benefits
2/23/07	Board & Carla	Conference Call to discuss initial agenda items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Strategic Plan • Review/Approve Revised Mission Statement • Act on Treasurer Recommendation on bank account needs • Discuss IMLS Grant • Review Revised Conference Plan from Committee • Discuss costs/implications of adding Rural Libraries and Newsletter as Membership Benefits
March 1	Carla w/help	Submit IMLS Collaborative Planning Grant
March 15	Susan	Write and submit press releases about our January planning meeting to ARSL listserv, Publib, Library Journal, American Libraries, Rural Library Services Newsletter and AL Direct.
March 15	Don/Ken	Draft revised by-laws for Board approval
March 31	Don	Use Susan's press release to draft a letter for board approval to State Librarians and CE staff.
April 2007	Board	Board meeting Conference Call agenda items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint members to Membership, Program & Publications and Marketing & Partnerships Committees so they can begin work • Review Don's draft letter to State Librarians, and decide whether to send a revised one to USDA Regional Centers •
4/1	Bernie/students	Get ARSL membership brochures into Indiana Rural Library Conference packets
5/1	Bernie/Jim R.	Get ARSL membership brochures into Michigan Rural Library Conference packets
6/1	Bernie/Jim M.	Get ARSL membership brochures into Rural Meeting at ALA Conference packets
June 21	Bernie	Hold inaugural meeting of CSL Advisory Committee at ALA
6/30	Board	Decide ARSL membership fee when jointly registering for conference
6/30	Board	Determine membership year – monthly based on month of joining? Or calendar year or fiscal year for all memberships?

Calendar of Key Events and Deadlines

January 2007

- 30/31 – ARSL Planning Summit, Clarion University

February 2007

- 15-ish – 2 Beckys and Carla conference call re: attorney/state of filing nonprofit status
- 23-ish – Board meeting by conference call

March 2007

- 1 – IMLS grant deadline

April 2007

- 12/13 – Indiana Small Libraries Conference

May 2007

- 7 – 9 – Michigan Rural Library Conference

June 2007

- 21 – 26 – ALA in Washington D.C. – includes Gates Rural Library Meeting

August 2007

September 2007

- IMLS grant award notifications
- 26 – 28 – ARSL National Conference in Columbus Ohio

October 2007

- 1 -- IMLS grants may begin (if awarded)
- 11/12 – Iowa State Library Association Conference (rural “by default” – only 6 urbans in Iowa)

November 2007

December 2007

January 2008

- ALA mid-winter conference . . . date/location?