

VALE Members Council Discussion on Future Directions Toth Group

Jan 23, 2015

Summary:

Our group discussed questions one through five and touched upon question six; we did not get to question seven. We affirmed Robert Leaver's rewording of Rich Sweeney's observation, that VALE "is an organization that serves academic libraries, not academic librarians, primarily through developing ways for libraries to collaborate on services and issues related to information resources." Our conversation centered on two themes, communication and structural realignment, with general recommendations aimed to improve information sharing, member involvement, and organizational structure.

1. Communication

We noted that the VALE website should be used as a more effective communication tool but is not, for it is clunky and minimally engaging. We think the site should be a portal similar to library homepages, which have been reconceived as virtual environments that facilitate many different kinds of user activities. To achieve as much, the portal should be maintained by permanent VALE staff. We see meetings as forms of communication and speculated that VALE might hold intermittent meetings/events for small groups on specific themes, some located in corners of the state. These meetings would facilitate collaboration of proximate and/or like-minded libraries and, for ones in the corners, would promote involvement of campuses least likely to attend VALE meetings because of distance. We also urge VALE to hold more virtual meetings.

2. Structural Realignment

Questions one, two and three flowed into a general discussion about how a new structure would generate new services, priorities and projects. We supported an idea advanced by Ed Christensen, that VALE's structure should be that of a triad centered on key functions: Shared Services -- Emerging Issues -- Conference. Shared Services would oversee e-resource licensing, VALID maintenance, and other functional projects. Emerging Issues would attend to trends, best practices and new technologies that might improve VALE services. Conference would steward the Users Conference and other VALE meetings. (My descriptions are speculative to add a little flesh to the bone. It's clear upon writing that Shared Services is larger than the other two areas, an imbalance that must be discussed as all of these ideas should be. -JT) We thought several Executive Committee members should be placed in each area to eliminate the distance between the EC and the committees/areas

Notes on Questions:

Question One: *Are all VALE committees oriented to address topics that concern "information resources and services"? If not, which ones aren't and how do they fit into VALE? Might they affiliate with other organizations?*

With the above focus in mind, we were able to frame the questions regarding our future directions, particularly with regard to the committee structure.

Since many of the committees seemed to focus more on professional development concerns, we agreed that we should dissolve the current committee structure and form task forces as needed (and by edict of the Executive Committee.) Also, by organizing under an umbrella of three key areas (aka Triad): Shared Resources, Conference, and Emerging Issues, many of the current committee interests could still be addressed. The Website Committee, however, was one committee that we felt might be more efficiently handled if coordinated by one paid staff member.

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Question Two: *Setting VALID aside, what services should VALE develop to offer to member libraries?*

Discussion on this question generally reflected the new triad focus but no specific recommendations were developed.

Question Three: *Setting VALID aside, on what issues or projects in the field might VALE members collaborate as a group?*

Question Four:

How might VALE communicate more effectively with its members? With all of its constituents?

Frequent newsletters and reports from the Executive Committee, website, login VALE portal, webcast meetings, regional meetings (recognizing regions) on various topics.

Question Five:

In all of this talk about strategic planning and reorganization, what are you not hearing? What topics or issues have not been addressed?

Offloading some of our issues to other groups,

Question Six:

What priorities should VALE establish for the near future?

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Question Seven:

VALE and NJEdge.Net have entered into a partnership for the provision of business services, but that partnership also opens the door for other types of collaboration. Given your knowledge of NJEdge.Net, how might VALE and NJEdge collaborate? How might Edge help VALE, and how might VALE help Edge?

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