Working Paper

Sep-16 Council Format

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At Sep-15 Council there was a robust discussion around the continuation of two ALSA Councils per year in addition to our annual conference. There were several alternative solutions proposed including scrapping one of the Councils and moving the other. The following proposal seeks to address the principle concerns expressed at Sep-15 Council whilst considering the impact on the ALSA Executive and the ALSA Committee to continue to fulfil their roles.

# Considerations

The principle concerns expressed in Sep-15 Council were;

* Cost
* Time devoted by LSS/A Presidents and executive members
* Benefits derived from having a council so late in the LSS/A members tenure

In addition to these concerns from an ALSA Committee, Executive and in particular as ALSA President I would add the following;

* Time to get the new ALSA Executive / Committee up and running with their 1 October start date
* Obtaining a mandate for the new direction of the new ALSA Executive / Committee for changes in direction especially where those changes are around advocacy or in direct contradiction to the previous ALSA Executive / Committee
* Finality of the old ALSA Executive / Committee being held to account for their actions
* Handover from the old to the new ALSA Executive / Committee
* Appointing the following year’s Conference Convenor

Whilst the concerns expressed at Sep-15 Council were all important from an affiliates perspective in both the 2014-15 and 2015-16 terms September Council has been pivotal in setting the direction for the following year. Further the ability for the new committee to meet the old in person during the three days of Council has meant that the individual members could hit the ground running.

The last consideration is the appointment of the Conference Convenor, the current process is that the host city twenty months hence hosted the September Council. Whilst not critical to the appointment of the Conference Convenor and ultimately a successful Conference an alternate process would need to be created were September Council to be removed completely.

# Virtual Council Proposal

In order to address the concerns of the LSS/A’s and persevere the benefits of September Council for the ALSA Committee / Executive, I propose a virtual council be held as a trial in Sep-16. The Council would be held as per the current rotation, being Adelaide in Sep-16 and simulcast to all major cities using a videoconferencing solution.

# Proposed Format

Council would be reduced to two days, Saturday and Sunday with no formal pre-Council activities. On the Saturday the old Committee / Executive would present on what they have done to Council and the new Committee / Executive. On the Sunday the new Committee / Executive would discuss their plans for the following year. Around these sessions would be time for each of the members of the incoming and outgoing Committee / Executive to meet their counterpart, discuss handover and check in.

Both the incoming and outgoing Committee / Executive would attend, if the proposal for appointed officers were successful then only those officers which the Executive identified as being necessary to attend would be required further increasing the cost savings.

Since new Committee / Executive is elected in July of every year there is a period between July Conference and 30 September where the old Committee / Executive is essentially a lame duck. The new Committee / Executive have to wait until February the following year to present at and run a Council. The two greatest issues that I have experienced in my time as President have been, 1) trying to get all of the LSS/A’s involved in ALSA and on board with our plan without a Council meeting and 2) maintaining the motivation of the Committee between elections in Jul-15 and taking our offices in Oct-15.

# Cost Savings

All LSS/A’s would be spend almost zero on the Virtual Council, all costs of hosting would be covered by ALSA and since it would be via videoconferencing travel costs would be minimal. ALSA presently spends roughly $10,000 to $12,000 on each Council including registration, flights and equity grants. If Melbourne Council had been run as a virtual council I estimate that it would have cost roughly $7,500 this represents a saving to ALSA in addition to removing the cost for LSS/A’s.

# Time Savings and Participation

Since Council would be reduced from three days to two days and it would be held from 9am – 5pm each day the time investment for individual LSS/A’s would be greatly reduced. It is my hope that this would result in greater participation at Council, further since there are almost no costs involved individual LSS/A’s could bring more people, hopefully if possible their incoming Presidents or Executives.

# Benefits to the in-coming Executive / Committee

By having their plans endorsed by Council before the commencement of their terms the Executive / Committee would be able to start on day one rather than having to wait to try to get out and consult with the LSS/A’s during October to December which from personal experience I can tell you is not easy.

Further there would be more time for handover and if individual members could not attend in person then they could still present as it would all be via videoconferencing.

# Still a trail run for Conference

As there would still be a Council the incoming and outgoing Committee’s would still have the opportunity to meet with the prospective host university and discuss the formalities of running conference. Further the Conference convenor could be appointed at this time in person as per the existing process.

# Practical Considerations

If this proposal is successful then the ALSA Committee and Executive will work with the host LSS/A in Adelaide for Sep-16 Council. The State representatives would organise for the most efficient location to be used for the local videoconferencing point.