

# **Academy for Lifelong Learning**

## **Report of the Long-range Planning Committee**

March 7, 2014

The Committee consisted of  
Margrit Eichler (Chair)  
Sandra Gold  
Frank Nicholson  
Matthew Segal  
Janet Tyrell

### **Procedure:**

The Committee met 4 times between January 24, 2014 and March 7, 2014. After reviewing reports of earlier LRP Committees available on our website we identified the issues we would address, including suggestions received from the board and other members.

### **Structure of Report:**

We are first listing our recommendations, then providing our rationale and the thinking which led to the recommendations, and finally providing appendices which contain some of the data we used in making our recommendations.

### **Recommendations:**

We recommend that

- 1. the Vade Mecum (administration manual) be re-titled “Academy Manual”;**
- 2. expenses for guest speakers in workshops remain the financial responsibility of the workshop;**
- 3. membership numbers be maintained at our at the current level of 350-375;**
- 4. an Outreach Committee be constituted;**
- 5. whenever possible, members of visible minorities be included in photos on our website and in our publications;**
- 6. the Membership Committee form a “New Member Orientation Subcommittee” that will devise and implement further policies to welcome new members;**
- 7. the President walk new Board Members through the Academy Manual very early in the term;**
- 8. an ad hoc committee be established to write a second volume of the Academy’s history;**

9. **the Curriculum Committee make an effort to increase the number of science courses;**
10. **topics from individual sessions be posted on the web and guests be permitted to attend individual sessions with the consent of the facilitators and presenters.**

### **Rationales:**

#### **Re 1: re-naming Vade Mecum:**

We discussed the name “Vade Mecum”. Some of us find the name attractive; others find it pretentious and off-putting. We all agree that for people who have no background in Latin it is difficult to understand. “Administration manual”, as an alternative, also sounds uninviting and not relevant to most members. We believe that the term “Academy Manual” expresses its purpose and is not intimidating.

#### **Re 2: expenses for guest speakers:**

At the suggestion of the President, we re-visited the recent change in policy of not providing honoraria for guest speakers within workshops. After discussion, we agreed with the recent policy change – every workshop should be free to invite outside speakers, but is financially responsible for funding this.

#### **Re 3, 4 and 5: maintain current membership numbers, constitute an Outreach Committee and showcase visible minority members where appropriate:**

These recommendations all came out of a broad discussion of membership and are therefore dealt with together. Membership had been a topic of discussion at the board. We looked at it in terms of numbers and in terms of composition.

##### **a) Numbers:**

Our current membership is 366. We feel that a range of 350-375 members is good – small enough to allow members to get to know each other, large enough to allow for diversity and a large enough pool of volunteers. Previous long-range planning committees have come to the same conclusion, usually on the basis of available space.

Every year, there is a turn-over of about 40 people, which means that we need to recruit approximately the same number. We therefore need an on-going recruitment mechanism. Should we ever be in the situation of having too many new applicants we can create a waiting list. Apparently, our best recruitment mechanism is word of mouth, and the Spring Talks, which draw in non-members, some of whom decide to join when they find out about the other activities of the Academy.

Nevertheless, we believe that it would be a good idea to create an Outreach Committee (which might be a sub-committee of an existing committee) that will be explicitly charged with recruitment including exploring strategic alliances and the placement of information at strategic places. At present, this is happening on an ad hoc basis. We fear that without a permanent mechanism, current efforts might dissipate.

***b) Ethnic composition:***

The membership is overwhelmingly white and of European backgrounds. We felt that it would be desirable to attract members from various other backgrounds. We were aware of the vigorous efforts made by previous Presidents to this effect. The current Vice-President will call a meeting of current members who belong to visible minorities and brainstorm with them.

We examined whether the courses offered were Eurocentric. Upon examination we concluded that this is not the case (see our discussion of recommendations 9 and 10).

However, when looking at the website, we found a sea of white faces. We therefore suggest ensuring that on the website and in any publications, some pictures of visible minorities be included whenever possible.

***c) Age composition:***

Margaret Robertson kindly provided us with an age breakdown of the members (see Appendix 1). The majority of members are in their early 70's. We wondered whether with the abolition of mandatory retirement the age of new members has been going up, but decided that the issue was not urgent enough to ask for a time-consuming calculation of this. However, if we were trying to recruit faculty or librarians at one of Toronto's universities who have phased retirement, the new Outreach Committee might wish to give presentations about ALL to university members who are contemplating phased retirement rather than focusing only on faculty and librarians who are already retired.

**Re 6: A New Member Orientation Subcommittee:**

When we recruit new members, we wish them to feel appreciated and valued. At present, new members receive a telephone call from the membership committee welcoming them. We believe that this is a good practice that should be continued. In addition, in the past, some other efforts were made to welcome new members. One strategy involved creating a buddy system. This might be done by asking facilitators to pair up new members with one continuing member for the first workshop attended by the new member. Another strategy was to have a table in the front hall of Knox during the first two weeks staffed by 2 or 3 people and to take newcomers around before classes start. We suggest that the membership committee form a "New Member Orientation Subcommittee" that will devise procedures to make new members feel valued and at home.

### **Re 7: the President walks new Board Members through the Academy Manual:**

The discussion of welcoming new members led us to reflect on how we socialize new Board Members. At present, there is no clear mechanism for this. The Academy Manual is the crystallized institutional memory of the Academy. We feel that it would be beneficial for the President to alert new Board Members to the Academy Manual early on in their terms, at a time convenient to the President and the new Board Members.

### **Re 8: writing volume 2 of the Academy history:**

The Past President asked us to consider whether or not there should be an update of the History of the Academy that is on the website. We looked at an attempt to create an up-date by integrating new data into the existing history. However, upon reading the history that was prepared for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Academy we felt that it is excellent and that trying to merge it with new data would destroy its integrity.

We therefore concluded that it would be desirable to have a sequel that will bring us up-to-date for our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. We believe that this will be best achieved by setting up an ad hoc committee, well in advance of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that will solicit archival materials from the membership and write the sequel.

### **Re 9 and 10: increasing the number of science courses and posting individual sessions on the net.**

These recommendations came out of a discussion of 4 questions sent to us by Dugal Campbell:

1. Has the mix (arts/science/current events) of workshops altered?
2. Do we have an idea of what the mix should be?
3. Is there a mix that will attract new members?
4. Does the mix follow the Academy's mission statement?

He then graciously provided us with the considerable analysis he himself had conducted to address some of these questions (see Appendix 2).

As Appendix 2 makes clear, there is considerable variation within each topic, which spike in some years and then drop. For instance, there were 2 workshops in Art in 2001/02 and 2002/03, 11 in 2007/08 and 7 in 2013/14, no courses at all in Popular Culture in 2003/03 and 2004/05 and 14 in 2013/14. Some areas are consistently low (e.g. Religion and Theatre), others consistently high (e.g. Current Affairs, History and Literature).

This answers his first question:

**1. *Has the mix (arts/science/current events) of workshops altered?***

Yes, it has, and it will probably continue to do so. Since workshops depend largely on suggestions made by members, we can anticipate that such fluctuations will continue.

**2. *Do we have an idea of what the mix should be?***

Partially, this question is answered by enrolments. When workshops are overenrolled, there is obviously great interest in a particular subject (or in a particular facilitator or set of facilitators). Since every member may propose workshops, members can propose to the Curriculum Committee subjects that are missing in one year for inclusion in future years. However, looking over the broad division of arts vs. science workshops, we would suggest that the Curriculum Committee make an effort to increase the number of science courses.

**3. *Is there a mix that will attract new members?***

Given that we would like to attract more members of visible minorities, we wondered whether there might be a Eurocentric bias in the Workshop offerings. For this reason, we re-analyzed the data provided by Dugal Campbell and looked for a Eurocentric bias versus a more comprehensive approach. We examined the titles and pulled out those workshops that were least likely to have a Eurocentric bias. Without studying syllabi, this is, at best, a crude method. It is highly likely that the amount of non-Eurocentric course content is greatly underestimated, since workshops may contain content from all parts of the world without this being visible in the title. We were pleased to note that even with this crude method we found considerable content from various parts of the world (see Appendix 3). The exercise was useful in so far as it ruled out one hypothesis and led to another suggestion:

It led us to a discussion of the fact that sometimes there are individual sessions within a Workshop that are of particular interest to some members who are not part of this Workshop. We feel that it would be advantageous if individual sessions were posted on the website, with the consent of facilitators and presenters, if guests are welcome. This might be of interest both to new members as well as long-time members.

**4. *Does the mix follow the Academy's mission statement?***

There seem to be concerns particularly with the film workshops: do they have sufficient academic content? We believe that any topic can be dealt with in a manner that is based on self-directed peer learning, is delivered within a

scholarly context, and of a calibre that is appropriate for the university setting. At issue is therefore the nature of the workshops rather than the mix of topics. With respect to the mix, looking at the mission statement (see appendix 4) we felt that overall the curriculum does fulfil the Academy's mission. However, it will require on-going efforts to ensure that all workshops meet the criteria as outlined in the Academy Manual (see appendix 5).

Respectfully submitted,

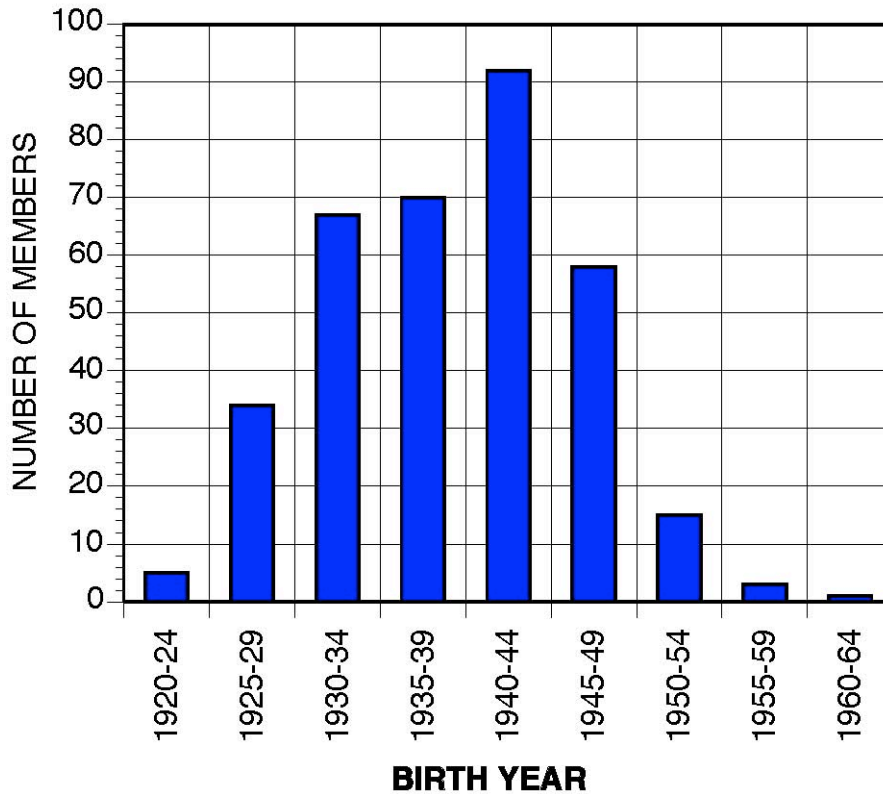
Margrit Eichler, Sandra Gold, Frank Nicholson, Matthew Segal, Janet Tyrell

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### ACADEMY MEMBERS 2013-2014 BY YEAR OF BIRTH

*(94% of members provided this data)*



## APPENDIX 2

### Percentage Breakdown of Total Workshop Schedule Hours by Workshop Subject

YEAR	Art	Curr Aff	Film	Hist	Lit	Music	Phil	Pop Cult	Science	Theat	Relig	Canada	Econ
2001-02	2	23	10	21	12	4	6	2	12	3	2	0	0
2002-03	2	25	10	23	8	6	2	2	8	4	0	0	2
2003-04	4	29	10	15	13	8	4	0	4	2	2	2	2
2004-05	7	22	7	22	15	9	4	0	7	4	2	0	0
2005-06	9	17	7	20	17	7	7	4	7	4	0	0	0
2006-07	7	25	9	18	20	5	5	2	3	6	0	0	0
2007-08	11	21	9	9	15	7	7	7	9	2	2	0	2

YEAR	Art	Curr Aff	Film	Hist	Lit	Music	Phil	Pop Cult	Science	Theat	Relig	Canada	Econ
2008-09	5	19	12	19	17	7	5	5	10	0	0	0	0
2009-10	9	20	14	16	18	5	5	5	7	0	0	0	0
2010-11	5	20	16	29	18	5	5	2	2	0	0	0	0
2011-12	5	15	15	29	15	5	5	2	5	2	2	0	0
2012-13	9	23	14	14	12	5	5	5	7	5	2	0	0
2012-13	9	23	14	14	12	5	5	5	7	5	2	0	0
2013-14	7	16	14	16	14	7	0	14	9	2	2	0	0

Source: Dugal Campbell

### APPENDIX 3

#### Workshops Least Likely to Have a Eurocentric Perspective

2001/02	Slavery through the Ages Africa in Literature & Biography
2002/03	Slavery through the Ages Coming to Canada
2003/04	--
2004/05	Africa (Sub-Saharan) Islam's Literature
2005/06	Africa since Independence Raj: India 1750-1950
2006/07	India in the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Migration Today China Rising Jewish History: 1492-1914 Mexican History: 1519-1919
2007/08	Arts of the East China Watch Jewish History, Part II Korea – A Land Divided Hinduism and Buddhism



2008/09	China Watch Pakistan Global Village on Film Indigenous Peoples Mexico – the Past Century Muslin-Christian Relations
2009/10	Arts of the East African History
2010/11	Arts of the East Rise of Arab Civilization The Japanese Novel in the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century
2011/12	Global Village on Film China: the formation of a People History of India
2012/13	Kaleidoscopic Explorations – Indus River Global Village on Film China – The flowering of a Civilization A View of South Africa – Literature Rivers of the World
2013/14	South African Artists Global Village on Film The Early History and Arts of Japan

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Mission**

Our mission is to promote learning and collegiality through the exchange of ideas and stimulating discussion.

The Academy for Lifelong Learning is a not-for-profit organization operated by volunteers for people interested in peer led study and dialogue.

### **Core Values and Beliefs**

#### ***Members of the Academy:***

- Value intellectual challenge, diversity of opinion and new ideas.
- Value education and continuing learning in a variety of subject areas.
- Believe learning takes place through a variety of activities and formats, including research, presentations and the exchange of information and ideas through stimulating discussion.
- Value sharing experiences and ideas with peers in social and informal

learning activities.

- Believe that a volunteer organization depends on individuals who share a sense of responsibility to contribute to the organization.

### **Goals**

- 1.** To provide a program of daytime peer-led workshops based on self-directed learning.
- 2.** To promote a collegial atmosphere by providing opportunities for social activity.
- 3.** To remain a not-for-profit, volunteer organization.
- 4.** To ensure the long-term viability of the Academy.

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **6.2 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING WORKSHOP TOPICS**

The Academy offers diversified workshops based on the concept of self-directed peer learning with an emphasis on presentation-based workshops. The following criteria are used by the Curriculum Committee to select new workshops that will be recommended to the Board:

#### *The workshop proposal*

- provides an opportunity for self-directed peer learning through presentations and discussion.
- provides the scholarly content and intellectual challenge suitable for the experience and maturity of Academy members.
- is of a calibre consistent with our University setting.
- encourages active participation and interaction among members.
- has a suitable facilitator available who has been a member of the Academy for at least one term.
- is likely to attract at least eight participants.