

ACADEMY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

REPORT OF THE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Group met at Knox College on Thursday March 21, 2013. Participating were Joe Casse, Jeannette Clark, Tony Keith (chair), Sue Kralik, Julia Matthews, Joan McCordic, Janet Tyrell and Doug Wilson.

The discussion was broadly focused on two questions:

1. Should the ALL apply to Revenue Canada for charitable status under the Income Tax Act, Canada?
2. Is there a limit to the size of the membership of the ALL under its present circumstances, and if so what should that limit be?

With respect to the first issue, we reviewed the pros and cons of charitable status as well as the history of previous discussions of this topic within the ALL. After a full and wide-ranging discussion, it was our conclusion that there is no compelling reason to change our present status, but that we would support making inquiries of other similar organizations as to their experience in this regard.

With respect to the second question, our present situation at Knox College would strongly suggest that the membership of the ALL cannot be allowed to grow much above our present level without involving a move to bigger quarters. There was general agreement that a membership level of around 350 persons was the most suitable. With our numbers now around 370, we are already seeing a need to expand workshop times into the late afternoon on three days of the week, which will be tried as an experiment in the 2013/14 season, and about which considerable reservation was expressed. There was also concern expressed over the apparent reluctance of some to either facilitate or participate in Friday workshops.

There was strong support for our present situation at Knox, which was described as a friendly and intimate place for our activities. Finding suitable other accommodation was recognized as a very difficult task,

with all present agreeing that the ALL would suffer a distinct loss if forced to move off campus.

The discussion expanded to include the nature of the ALL experience. Some argued that we should continue to strive to maintain a strictly academic model, with each workshop session requiring extensive preparation by all of its members. This position would view our very successful film groups as not following this model, and would discourage their growth. An opposing viewpoint was vigorously presented by other members of the group, who see the film groups as simply an expression of the sort of experience which many of our members want. It was also stressed that contrary to the view of some, members of the film groups are not merely passive onlookers but are very much involved in the preparation and presentation of critical examinations of film as an art form, and that the film workshops are entirely within the core aims of the ALL. One member suggested, perhaps facetiously, that it would in fact be in order to consider making the choice of at least one film workshop mandatory for everyone.

Some members of the group were of the view that there was no real difference between those who participate in the film groups, and those who participate in groups which study world issues through newspaper study groups, such as The Economist or The New Yorker.

Most members of the group expressed a willingness to allow our members to decide what sorts of workshops they would like to participate in. An organization dedicated to lifelong learning must surely be willing to allow its members to continually try new and different types of study on a wide variety of subjects and in a wide variety of forms.

In the end, we agreed that it would be of value to study our membership and workshop records in order to determine if there are discernable patterns from which we can learn more concerning the sort of workshops our members will likely support. This sort of study might usefully be carried out as a joint project of the Membership and Curriculum Committees and would explore such questions, among others, as

- how many of our members are only registered in a film workshop?

- how many members are registered in only one workshop?
- how many members are registered in two workshops?
- how many members are registered in three workshops?
- how many members are registered in four workshops?
- how many members take courses only on one day of the week?
- how many members only attend in the morning?
- how many members only attend in the afternoon?
- to what extent does place of residence affect workshop choice and attendance?
- are all of our available workshop time slots full? If not, how can they best be used?
- what common perceptions exist among our members concerning the ALL and its operations?
- are these perceptions grounded in hearsay or are they based on actual experience?
- should there be a limit on the number participating in a workshop, or should the number of participants be left to the discretion of the facilitator?

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Keith
Vice-president