ALASKA RESOURCES LIBRARY
AND
INFORMATION SERVICE
ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT:
FINAL REPORT and RECOMMENDATIONS

By
Sandy Dunn
Bureau of Land Management
(907) 271-3305
sandy_dunn@ak.blm.gov

and

Nina Malyshev
Alaska State Library
269-6571
nina_malyshev@eed.state.ak.us

January 28, 2002

PROJECT BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this report is to provide the results of an organizational assessment project conducted for the Alaska Resources Library and Information Service (ARLIS). In July 2001, the ARLIS Management Team requested that we, Sandy Dunn and Nina Malyshev, design a process to appraise the ARLIS management team structure. After further discussions with the Management Team and ARLIS' Founders Board, we enlarged the scope of this project to focus on the following broad set of assessment questions:

    A. What is the overall organizational "state of health" at this time?

    B. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current team based management structure?

    C. What expectations do staff members and significant organizational stakeholders have of each other?

    D. What improvements should be made to insure the future health and vitality of ARLIS?

From August-December 2001, we completed 40 individual interviews with all members of the ARLIS staff, Founder's Board, and the University of Alaska's (UAA) Consortium Library employees who regularly work or interact with the ARLIS staff. The individual interviews consisted of answering a series of questions (see Appendix A) related to the overall assessment outcomes as listed above. The notes collected from all the individual interviews were periodically read, analyzed, and finally categorized into major themes to produce the findings and recommendations outlined in this report. In the course of this project, we also reviewed a number of documents provide by ARLIS staff describing the history of the organization and its operating and administrative structure.

The data collected during this assessment does not lend itself to qualitative analysis except in a few instances, which are noted. Our goal is rather to adequately capture, understand, interpret and represent the major concerns and, in many cases, the differing perspectives held by ARLIS staff and major stakeholders. We hope primarily to give the organization some useful information about itself, as well as recommend possible courses of action.

This report is organized in the following way. Under each major category of investigation, the major findings are listed. Each finding is then explained in

greater detail. When possible, examples from the interview data are provided as support. Secondly, the implications of the particular finding are discussed. And finally, our recommendations and matters to consider in resolution of the issue are presented as needed. Answers to assessment question D (i.e., What improvements should be made to insure the future health and vitality of ARLIS?) are incorporated into the relevant finding.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. ARLIS' Overall Organizational "State of Health"

Based on the data gathered in the first set of interview questions, which asked about the current health and future direction of ARLIS, we identified four major findings related the organization at large:

A1. All major organizational stakeholders view ARLIS very positively as a library service and collection.

A2. There is a growing awareness of ARLIS as an effective unified service organization, however, one that still lacks a coherent internal structure and cohesive organizational culture.

A3. ARLIS' move to the "new" UAA Consortium Library is generally regarded as a workable but significant challenge for both parties.

A4. The collective "visions" and plans for the future growth of ARLIS are at odds with its financial condition, and its meager, unstable, and complex budget is a great source of anxiety.

A1. All major organizational stakeholders view ARLIS very positively as a library service & collection.

All the interview participants strongly agreed that ARLIS has succeeded, even exceeded, its original intent of providing the leading library and information service serving the needs of professionals and the public in the area of resource development, management and conservation within the state of Alaska. Interview participants made comments such as, "It was a great idea from the beginning that has served the founding agencies very well. " "It has made materials far more accessible than they ever were in the one-person libraries. The public and many of the consultants also think this is the best thing that could have ever happened. " "ARLIS is now the premier natural resource collection in the state bar none. " "The collective expertise of the

3

librarians is awesome. " Participants specifically praised the quality and accessibility of the library's collections, the quality and depth of the reference service provided by the librarians, and the diligence of staff, in general, in responding to user needs.

While this evidence for the success of ARLIS' library and information program is largely anecdotal and does not include the opinions of the end-users themselves, we heard nothing, at all, in the any of the interviews to suggest that ARLIS was not indeed providing an active, responsive and superior *collective* program of library services and collection of materials. This collaborative effort offers a range and scope of expertise, services, and resources, useful to a wide range of user groups, that an individual governmental agency library would be hard pressed to match. Many of the participants lauded the commitment of the ARLIS staff and the original Founders and, especially the hard work and dedication of the six agency librarians, in making ARLIS a success.

We also congratulate the ARLIS staff and supporters and the Founders Board in fulfilling the intent of the 1997 **Alaska Natural Resources Library Group Reinvention Laboratory** with such success. Given the strength of the library service program and collection, we do not believe any significant improvements are currently needed in this area and urge the staff and Founders to focus rather on improvements in the organizational, budgetary and management realm as proposed in the ensuing findings.

A2. There is a growing awareness of ARLIS as a unified service organization, however, one that still lacks an orderly internal structure and cohesive organizational culture.

During our initial meeting with the Founders Board, one of the Founders asked "I wonder to what extent we have managed to meld all the various agency missions since we formed?" This question can potentially be answered on a number of levels. From a library service point of view, findings indicate the founding agency librarians have indeed created a unified "super-structure" for users: one location and collection, and standardized policies such as circulation, interlibrary loan, and reference service. One participant said, "Symbolically we became one when, after much strife, the collection was finally merged." Others indicated that there are far fewer problems with individual agendas and priorities than in earlier years.

The findings show, however, the development of the internal organization has lagged behind the development of library service. In many ways, this is not a surprising finding. ARLIS is still a relatively young organization and its

unique funding structure presents considerable challenges in creating an integrated operating and management structure. Secondly, it appears that most of the human effort and energy in the last four years has been directed toward making the external library program viable rather than focusing on the needs of the internal organization, specifically, in regard to reporting lines, on-site and off-site supervisory expectations, performance evaluations, and personnel policies such as working hours. In the interviews with internal staff, participants often seemed uncertain what supervisor they should ask for information or guidance on a spectrum of issues such as calling in sick, deciding on job priorities, clarifying a certain policy or procedure, etc. One staff member said, "I feel as though I work for everybody. Sometimes I am really not sure who my boss is."

During the interviews, we were also struck by the fact that staff persistently identified themselves as specific agency personnel, for example, saying "I work for UAA" rather than "I am an ARLIS" employee. We also felt many of the employees had an uncertain sense of identity or divided loyalty given the perceived demands of their employing agency and ARLIS. While a sense of organizational belonging varies among individuals, we propose ARLIS has yet to develop a strong, cohesive "organizational culture," for the lack of a more precise term, to which employees can easily attach themselves.

Although, one participant offered the thought, "There will not be a true 'ARLIS employee' until this generation of founding agency employees retire or leave," we, nonetheless, believe it is critical to attend to the continued development of a coherent, internal structure and meaningful, unified culture in order to ensure the morale and confidence of all current employees.

We propose two major recommendations related to this finding:

1. With the input of staff, the Management Team should clarify and formalize:

    The organizational reporting structure considering the following issues: delineating the different roles and responsibilities of on-site versus off-site supervisors, including supervisors of record; creating a supervisory back-up plan (i.e., when one supervisor is away, who is in charge?); and assigning supervisors by functional areas or, alternately, in such a way that is readily understandable to staff. We further recommend that supervisors should be assigned by functional areas in lieu of a superior plan of organization. The majority of the staff expressed the wish to be supervised by someone who did the same work or who intimately understood the nature of the task at hand. ARLIS could well

consider a more complex form of organization, such as matrix or process-based, in its later development; however, today a premium should be based on a simpler, more traditional structure, with which employees have had experience, to ensure a system of internal order.

A well understood set of internal supervisory expectations. It is impossible to codify and standardize the expectations of a group of supervisors completely but the interviews suggest there is a fairly different style, approach and standard amongst the ARLIS supervisors with regard to the employees they supervise. The employees find this state of affairs confusing.

An internal ARLIS system of performance evaluation equitably applied to all full-time members of the organization. The Management Team could consider a system of peer evaluations that is confidential within the confines of the group.

A set of codified personnel policies, again specific to ARLIS, to deal with the workplace issues staff consider to be most critical such as working hours, flextime, the granting of leave, etc.

An orientation plan for employees specifically focusing on ARLIS' distinct workplace culture and rules, especially as they differ from the workplace culture and rules of the employing agency. The employing agency should, of course, also have an orientation plan in place to explain the rules to which ARLIS employees will be bound.

2. Increasing the amount of communal experiences and "talk" about ARLIS. Research suggests that strong cultures are built through a variety of mechanisms, for example, sharing and later remembering common experiences, especially ones where a obstacle has been overcome or a significant goal achieved together; celebrating milestones and significant events in the history of an organization; a sense of a common fate and shared attributes; and talking "as if we are one." ARLIS has many reasons to be proud of what has been accomplished. There are significant challenges ahead, which will require the participation of and commitment from all employees. We urge the Management Team, and the Founders Board as appropriate, to verbalize the collective achievements of staff, as well as discuss the work of the future with the entire staff, on a frequent and regular basis.

A3. ARLIS' move to the "new" UAA Consortium Library is generally regarded as a workable but significant challenge for both parties.

Although, we did not originally ask about ARLIS' impending move to the UAA Consortium library when it completes its expansion in 2004, it immediately came up as a topic of great consequence for organizational members. The great majority of ARLIS' staff is resigned to the necessity of the move but consider it a mixed blessing, at the very best. The primary concern, which was repeatedly expressed, was the fear of losing the unique identity of ARLIS within the UAA system. This is a grave concern for ARLIS members who perceive they will either be forced to dilute their identity as a special library within an academic library setting, or that they will simply be subsumed by the university over time. Staff also had concerns about the security of the rare materials in the ARLIS collection, differing operating policies and procedures, and blending the service approaches and practices of a special and academic library.

UAA also had concerns about the move, although, they were far more muted. As one UAA interviewee said, "This is not a marriage of equals, so they will have to sacrifice more than we." Staff at UAA was concerned about the "special accommodations" (e.g., free parking, locked shelving, separate circulation systems), they will have to make on a continuous basis to keep ARLIS happy. However, we generally found the UAA staff eager and ready to work with the ARLIS staff in order to ensure a smooth transition. Many echoed the sentiment, "We need to start working on things of mutual concern right now."

The issues the two parties will need to negotiate prior to and during the move will be significant, however, we find nothing inherently unworkable in this situation. ARLIS members will make this move because their long-term survival depends on it. UAA is ready and willing to accommodate its new "neighbor" to the best of its ability. While the move to the university will hinder physical access for some agency users, many of the interviewees pointed out that ARLIS stands to significantly increase its user base, and thus its constituency, simply by closer proximity to the academic community. At the moment, each side is very wary of the other, but in the final analysis, the majority of interviewees want and hope their future "co-habitation" will succeed.

The bigger question related to this move is perhaps more philosophical in nature because the long-term destiny of ARLIS, as a separate entity, is very uncertain given this arrangement. What chance does ARLIS truly have of maintaining its very unique identity over time? Are there advantages, both

human and material, to maintaining ARLIS as a separate entity? Given the myriad of practical matters related to the move and ARLIS' resettlement in the Consortium library, this question could be easily ignored or disparaged. We cannot resolve this dilemma but, rather, want to acknowledge it as an area of critical concern for all the major stakeholders in the future evolution of this organization. In conclusion, we acknowledge that what appear as moments of hesitancy or "unrealistic requests" on the part of ARLIS might be largely driven by a keen sense of frustration at their inability to have greater control over the conditions of their future destiny.

We propose three recommendations related to this finding:

1. Convene a process to collectively brainstorm and prioritize a "laundry list" of issues and decisions that need to be made before the actual move. We collected such a list from the interviews but believe it would be preferable for the two parties to go through this exercise themselves. This can be a fairly straightforward, even, somewhat mechanical process to simply get all the issues "on the table" before deciding what to do about them, justify or argue for them. This list will also help key decision-makers identify the "easy" decisions, as well as the ones that are more complex and require complex or time-consuming deliberation or action. All the issues currently "up in the air" will be readily identified. And finally, a decision/action timeline can be built from the consolidated "laundry list." It is also very important to get input at all levels during this process, and we urge everyone in the two organizations to contribute to the brainstorming, data-gathering exercise.

2. Formalize agreed-upon topics related to the move in a written agreement. On more than one occasion, interviewees said, "The handshake with UAA concerns me more than anything else. It is just a gentleman's agreement at this point and that is not good enough." Many of the Founders were clearly uncomfortable with this informal arrangement even if they supported the move in theory. The process suggested in the previous recommendation should aid in clarifying key issues prior to this step.

3. Appoint an ARLIS liaison to communicate with UAA about ongoing move issues and concerns. Staff at UAA should not have to guess which staff member to approach with what issue related to the move. It is also impractical to ask any UAA member, for example, the Director of the Library to continually negotiate and renegotiate major decisions related to the move with six individuals. Decisions, whenever feasible, should be negotiated and decided upon internally by the Management Team or the Founders Board or in concert, and communicated through one ARLIS team member. While the liaison arrangement will not work in every instance, we firmly believe the

move is unnecessarily complicated without a more efficient system of communication.

A4. The collective "visions" and plans for the future growth of ARLIS are at odds with its financial condition, and its meager, unstable, and complex budget is a great source of anxiety.

We asked every interviewee to describe their vision for the future of ARLIS. Given the current success of the library program, the staff primarily wanted the organization to survive, and specifically, to grow in a manner that satisfied user demand and allowed them to keep with the demands of collection development and maintenance. In fact, more than one staff member echoed the sentiment "We are drowning in our success and yet we are expected to tow the same budget year after year." The Management Team and Founders generally had broader visions that included such ideas as the development of new services, more than likely, requiring additional sources of funding.

The lack of adequate and stable funding was a topic of discussion in approximately 90% of the interviews. This lack of funding is widely known and was even mentioned by UAA library staff who has relatively little knowledge of ARLIS. Many of the Founders and the Management Team also said they have pursued a number of strategies to increase ARLIS' budget since its inception but that the lack of adequate and stable funding is essentially the major problem hobbling this organization.

Additionally, many participants referred to ARLIS' particularly complex budget that is composed of a hodge-podge of in-kind and cash contributions from a number of different federal and state entities, as well as additional funding through grant sources. Not only is the budget difficult to understand, it is unquestionably difficult to administer. This is a particularly troublesome issue for UAA, who not only provides for most of ARLIS' staff but also handles a great deal of accounting and budgetary management for them. It was evident from a number of interviews that both parties are seriously hampered by the lack of a well-codified budget process and system of financial management and control for ARLIS. In fact, staff at UAA believed the burden fell most heavily on them to ultimately resolve the problems caused by this situation.

The funding and budgetary problems facing ARLIS are well understood by all. However, we feel that the anxiety the staff must experience in response to this situation is rarely discussed in public and, thus, far less accepted. The ARLIS staff, especially the Management Team, is under enormous,

continuous pressure to meet a number of competing demands with a budget that is not even guaranteed from year to year. While the outside world has many, and often, high expectations of this organization, ARLIS can realistically do little more with the resources currently at its disposal.

We propose three recommendations related to this finding:

1. Suspend discussions and plans for new or expanded services or initiatives until the budget is increased or stabilized. This recommendation is in direct counterpoint to most strategies of organizational growth but in our judgement, this kind of planning puts unwarranted pressure on the staff to produce results, products or services they are not able to provide, much less successfully, with the current level of funding.

We understand the Founder's Board and Management Team has been pursuing a number of initiatives, such as securing new partners and advocating for a permanent budget, over the years. While this clearly involves a great deal of coordinated effort, we must conclude, given the difficulty of these initiatives, that only the Founders truly have the leverage, influence and clout to bring these efforts to fruition.

2. Secure the necessary expertise to assist ARLIS with its budget process and create a system of sound financial management and control. The data suggests the complexity of the ARLIS budgetary process is beyond the expertise level of most professional librarians. Additionally, this process demands a level of time and attention the current staffing structure cannot easily maintain. Possibly one of the founding agencies could provide ARLIS with in-kind budgetary analysis and support, even on a part-time basis. If additional staffing is secured for ARLIS in the future, we highly recommend hiring a position to manage and oversee the budget.

3. ARLIS and UAA should use the upcoming revision of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address, first, mutual expectations and then problems related to the accounting and budgetary support UAA provides, such as the calculation of personnel costs and use of in-kind employees; the coordination of grants; and paperwork and communication in general. It strikes us that the expectations between the two parties are not clear, or that if they were clear initially, they have become muddied over the last five years. Unfortunately, most of the interactions that currently take place between the two involve resolving problems. However, we are convinced, based on our interviews, that there is genuine good will between the parties to do the right thing by each other. They are frustrated when that does not

happen. There is more than an adequate foundation on which to begin negotiation of a new MOU.

B. ARLIS' Team-based Management Structure

Based on the data gathered in the second set of interview questions, which asked about the ARLIS' current management structure, we identified two major findings:

> B1. The team-based structure is generally regarded as the best way to currently manage ARLIS by internal staff members versus external stakeholders who want one director. The Founders are almost equally divided on the issue.

> B2. The team is perceived as a "collection of different personalities" rather than a cohesive, decisive, genuine managerial entity.

B1. The team-based structure is generally regarded as the best way to currently manage ARLIS by internal staff members versus external stakeholders (e.g., UAA staff) who want one director. The Founders are almost equally divided on the issue.

At the conclusion of the interviews, we counted preferences for the Management Team versus one director. In some instances, we could not make a clear distinction between the participant's choices or had no preference clearly written in our notes, so that some counts are noted as NCO (i. e., no clear opinion expressed). The preferences are:

	Team	Director	NCO
Founders	3	3	2
ARLIS Fed/State staff	12	4	2
UAA paid staff	3	8	3
Totals	18	15	7

As the statistics demonstrate, ARLIS employees, as a whole, were predisposed to their current team structure. Additionally, virtually every

ARLIS employee believes the overall management of the organization was more efficient since the November 2000 transition from the large team (i.e., all staff members) to the team of six (i.e., the agency librarians) even if they did not entirely support the team concept. Many said the original "large team" consensus decision-making structure was virtually unworkable. They now believe the smaller Management Team is making better and faster decisions on behalf of the whole organization.

Most ARLIS staff members simply said during the interviews that the present management structure worked from their point of view and they saw no advantage in changing to a more traditional one-director structure. Many echoed the comment, "one director only works when you have absolutely the right person for that job." They believed that since ARLIS was a very unique library, it would take a very unique, and possibly rare, individual to run the organization successfully. Others said a one-director structure was not suitable for the type of "hybrid type of organization we have." They believe the current non-hierarchical agency arrangement works precisely because it keeps the various state and federal interests in balance. They worried that the one director would be loyal to his or her employing agency and thus neglect the needs of the other agencies.

The "team of six" agency librarians were particularly pleased with the evolution and growing maturity of their team and spoke eloquently of the high degree of respect, trust, and working collaboration they have achieved among one another, especially in the last year. All acknowledged the enormous amount of time, effort and dedication it took to bring the team to this level of development because "much of the time we are in uncharted territory."

A number of the Management Team members have come to accept the amount of time it takes to reach group decisions. They believe that once they come to a decision, all the various point of view have been aired and thoroughly debated and, consequently, the resulting decision is particularly sound. Others felt that "getting to consensus means talking forever and we don't have a good system for getting the buck stopped. Sometimes you can move forward, sometimes you can't." They recognize, as the majority of organizational "outsiders" indeed confirmed, "the outside world doesn't know how to deal with us. They don't know who to talk to in many cases." Despite some of the difficulties, the majority of the team is in favor of keeping their current form of management in place.

The majority of UAA staff firmly believed one director should run ARLIS. The length of time it took the team to make a decision was the major reason cited

by interviewees. A dissenting opinion was typically held by UAA staff who worked onsite at ARLIS on a regular basis and thought the Management Team functioned well together and saw no reason why the team should not continue to lead the organization.

The Founders Board represented the widest spectrum of views on this question. On one hand, some Founders were pleased with the team concept and made comments such as, "They have built a level of chemistry amongst themselves. They resolve conflicts and work through their problems." And "I don't sense a vacuum in terms of a boss. They share accountability amongst themselves." Others wanted one director citing "an accountability gap. Who is ultimately responsible for the follow through over there?" Others were unsure how ARLIS was actually managed on a day-to-day basis. A group in the middle did not want to replace the team structure completely but clearly felt the present structure needed to be refined from its present form, probably to some form of "a first among equals" approach. They proposed the Management Team consider options such as a team leader who rotated every year in lieu of the current structure where power is shared equally among the members.

This diversity of opinion clearly presents a quandary for the organization in terms of its future course. There are advantages and disadvantages to both sides of the issue. The great majority of interviewees felt almost passionately about the merits of their preferred system of management, over the other, and are unlikely to change their minds. There is no easy resolution to this issue that will satisfy all the major stakeholders.

We, therefore, suggest the following course of action:

We believe, first and foremost, there is no compelling reason to change ARLIS' current system of management. ARLIS has a functional system of management. It is not always perfect. It is a cumbersome structure for decision-making. It does not always work as efficiently as a one-director system might, but sometimes a traditional hierarchy does not work as well as a team. As many of the staff noted, this is an appropriate model if you specifically want to represent the different agencies who belong to this consortium.

It is important to consider most of the ARLIS staff prefers the current form of management. Most will freely admit it has been a difficult and often painful struggle to bring the overall management of ARLIS to its current level of functioning. However, they also believe they are finally achieving what many said would be impossible. That is, four years since its inception, ARLIS is very

much a going concern adequately, even, capably led by a true self-managing group of peers.

Whereas, a rotating team leader approach might be more efficient in theory, we are concerned this approach could unleash a destabilizing dynamic that is destructive in the short-term. The Management Team appears to have tried to equalize and share power among themselves very conscientiously over the years. While we advocate the use of a liaison model for various large projects, such as the move to UAA, we are concerned that appointing a dominant lead, even temporarily, would cause resentment among a group of individuals who have genuinely made an effort to overcome their differences in order to "act as one" on behalf of the organization. In our judgment, this is a difficult feat in the best of groups and should not be dismantled without good reason.

In conclusion, we concede the fact one day a director might become both necessary and beneficial for ARLIS. It the organization suddenly receives a major amount of money or if a significant number of team members, say, three or more leave at the same time, a director should be considered for the following reasons. First, a significant increase in resources would simply require someone to spend far more time purely managing the organization than any of the librarians currently has to time to do now. Whether or not, any of the current team members wish to take on this responsibility is uncertain but it might be difficult, if not impossible, for this individual to succeed for the reason cited above. If a significant number of team members left the organization, it would put a considerable burden on the remaining members to run the organization until new team members are hired. In our estimation, it would also take a long time, maybe even years, to build a cohesive, smoothly functioning team, such as they have now, essentially from the beginning.

B2. The team is perceived as a "collection of different personalities" rather than a cohesive, decisive, genuine managerial entity.

Although, we have covered the major issues related to the management of ARLIS in the section above, this finding requires brief discussion. In literally all of our interviews, we heard the word "personalities" or the phrase "collection of different personalities" used in reference to the team. While the Management Team is increasingly seeing itself as a cohesive entity, it appears those outside the team are not.

A number of participants also ascribed a wide variety of organizational problems to ARLIS' form of team management. In other words, participants

14

often blamed the team structure, although, not necessary its members, for a number of things such a particular decision or, conversely, the lack of one. During the interviews, we heard comments such as "teams usually make poor decisions," or "teams don't work well in a crisis." More than one person expressed the following thought, "team don't work in my opinion, and they especially don't work when they are trying to run the show." Whether or not any team can be held accountable for such a spectrum of organizational woes is highly debatable, but we must conclude this team suffers from an "image problem" both in the generic, (i.e., teams in general) and specific (i.e., this particular one) sense.

To a certain extent, the Management Team might need to contend with a widespread perception, judging from the interviews, that a team simply cannot run an organization successfully. It is probably safe to assume that teams of this type are generally not accorded the legitimacy and status that accrues to directors and formal leaders of organizations. That said, we recommend the Management Team consider the following actions to deal with the implications of this finding as it relates specifically to them:

1. Act as one director might act whenever possible. During a meeting with the Management Team, we rhetorically asked could they "think and act as one director might," even though, they are not. While this was clearly an abstract question, we were proposing the team scrutinize some of its processes, decisions, and actions with an eye as to how the wider world perceives and judges them within its frame of reference.

2. Consider using an external facilitator when a difficult decision must be made. Both the members themselves, as well as others, criticized the team for slow decision-making. Since not every group can always come to a decision given its internal resources, we recommend asking for outside "process" assistance when the team comes to an impasse in the future.

C. Stakeholder Expectations

The major concerns and viewpoints of the participants have been presented in the previous section. However, we want to conclude the report with a discussion of the expectations the various groups had of each other. Our recommendations are included as in the preceding narrative.

ARLIS Staff

ARLIS staff members basically want to feel included in the organization again. Although, no one wanted to return to the "big team" style of management, the staff wants to feel "more in the loop." Specifically, almost the entire staff asked to see the agenda and minutes from the Management Team meetings promptly and consistently.

Staff was also concerned about the lack of Technical Services representation of on the Management Team. Because Technical Services comprises a fairly sizable number of people not directly represented on the Management Team, many participants, at various levels of the organization, felt it was unfair to this group of employees. This issue of representation is particularly important to this group because they were apt to feel more estranged from the rest of the library working "behind the scenes."

Almost everyone spoke of the transition from the big to the smaller team in November 2000. This was a very difficult event and traumatic event for many members of the organization and one that will not be forgotten quickly. While it appears that much of the bad feeling surrounding the event has eased, regaining a full sense of trust is still an issue for employees.

The Management Team, in turn, recognizes and indeed has been working on addressing many of the needs of the staff and broader organization as recommended in this report.

The following broad recommendation is proposed:

1. Institute frequent, regular, face-to-face meetings with all staff. Ask for collective staff input on important issues. Celebrate ARLIS achievements as a group. The "off-site" members of the Management Team should particularly make a point of coming to these meeting, discussions and celebrations to be more visible to staff. People liked working at ARLIS, they cared about the job they did and the mission of the organization, and liked the people with whom they worked. The data strongly suggests the staff would simply like to gather, interact, and discuss matters of mutual concern, as an entire group, more often.

The Founders

A healthy relationship exists between the Management Team and the Founders Board. The Founders think the ARLIS staff is doing a good job. Furthermore, they believe that agency personnel are pleased with the service

they receive. The librarians, in turn, laud the Founder's interest, dedication, and "sincere commitment to make this work." The librarians are convinced ARLIS exists because the Founders bought into the concept from the very beginning. They are grateful some of the original founding members have remained on the board. We also believe the continued participation of some of the highly placed members of the board continues to broadcast an important message to the outside world: "ARLIS is a commendable enterprise, worthy of our attention."

However, the librarians did ask the Founders to take the burden of seeking the "big money" for the organization and not assign them "make work" assignments upon which the Founders did not later act. The Founders, in turn, asked the librarians to be more entrepreneurial in their vision of what ARLIS could provide in the future. The Founders clearly want to go well beyond the "book" model of information service.

There is one, specific noteworthy theme in the Founders' expectations data. Some of the Founders questioned their current level of involvement in the organization. They made comments such as "Are the Founder's doing their job?" "We never have a dialogue just amongst ourselves as to what we should be doing. I think it is time now." And "I am guilty of not being more engaged at the moment. Some of the help they need with the budget is going to take a lot more sweat equity on my part." While this sentiment was, by no means, consistently held by all the Founders, there was clearly some ambiguity about the role the Founders Board should currently play in the life of the organization.

The following broad recommendation is, thus, proposed:

1. The Founders should exercise the option of meeting alone as the occasion demands. If the Founders do indeed need to have an ongoing dialogue amongst themselves as to their role and some of the large issues facing the organization, we believe it would be far more profitable to initiate this dialogue outside the regular quarterly meeting format.

University of Alaska Staff

We have discussed many elements of the relationship between ARLIS and UAA staff in the first section of this report. As described above, the current relationship can be characterized as wary but hopeful. UAA staff primarily wants the relationship with ARLIS to work and be relatively trouble-free. UAA staff that regularly work at ARLIS are very positive about the organization.

They will be good "ambassadors" for both parties during the move planning process.

We have one final broad recommendation:

1. Strengthen the relationship between UAA and ARLIS on a social (i.e., interpersonal) level, as well as on a formal basis. ARLIS and UAA employees typically do not know each other well. When they communicate, it is, more often than not, to solve a problem. One of our participants said, "We should just begin the whole thing with a tea-party or even a couple of them." What a good idea!

APPENDIX A
ARLIS Assessment
Baseline Interview Questions

Name:
Title:
Date:

Please tell me about your history and association with ARLIS.

Organizational Health Topic

Please think about where ARLIS has come since its inception. Looking at any aspect(s) of the overall system that you think important, please tell me what is going particularly well?

What needs particular improvement?

What is your perspective on the move to UAA?

What is your vision for the future of ARLIS?

Team Management Topic

As you know, the specific goal of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of ARLIS' team-based management structure. Given your experience with this library, what are the advantages of their current system of management?

What are the disadvantages?

What is your perspective on changing to a traditional "one director" system of management?

Any other modifications and improvements you would suggest in the current management structure?

Expectations Topic

What do you personally want from [other stakeholder group as appropriate]? What do you think they want from you?

Do you have any final thoughts or concerns before we conclude the interview?