

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Advisory Board Meeting
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Springfield, IL
May 8, 2012

Members Present: Bill Thomas, Dick Meister, Steve Beckett, Pat Reardon, Craig Sautter, Ranjan Karri

Members Absent: Donna Carroll, Leigh Beinen, Charles Branham, Gary Hammons, Sean Vinck

Library Staff: Eileen Mackevich, Kathryn Harris, Teri Barnett

Executive Director Eileen Mackevich called the meeting to order and welcomed and thanked those present for their willingness to serve on this newly created Board. Members and staff then introduced themselves. Director Mackevich stated that the Governor will appoint the Chair of the Advisory Board.

Director Mackevich explained that there are three boards associated with the Presidential Library and Museum: IHPA Board of Trustees, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation and this newly created Board, the Library Advisory Board.

Director Mackevich then explained of the role of each Board stating that they are neither in competition nor duplicative nor in conflict with each other. Each Board has unique reasons for being. For example, the main function of the IHPA Board is to set policy for the Agency; the Foundation Board supports programming and projects of the ALPLM, and the Advisory Board advises the Library and staff about potential programs, expansion of services, accessibility to collections etc. It was also noted that currently the Foundation Board is focused on retiring the debt for the acquisition of the Taper (Lincolniana) collection.

Discussion re the Taper Collection segued into a brief discussion about the question of provenance that is associated with many museum collections. The idea was presented that perhaps one of the public educational programs that could be developed and presented by the ALPLM staff could focus on provenance and that included information about the moral, ethical, and legal issues associated with museum and library collections, in general.

After additional discussion of the roles of the Boards, members requested that an organization chart that reflects the relationship of the Boards to the IHPA be made available. In addition, clarification of the mission statements of the ALPLM, the Foundation and its Boards be clarified for Advisory Board members.

In explaining that the ALPLM was not a part of the National Archives and Records Administration, which administers the Presidential Library System Act, but is rather a state agency (IL Historic Preservation Agency), a brief discussion followed concerning the fate of the US Grant Papers which were formerly held at Southern Illinois University—Carbondale, Morris Library and are now at Mississippi State University.

Discussion then moved onto marketing issues, basically does the Library have a marketing plan? With the short answer being NO, Board member Thomas encouraged the development and implementation of one, not only to increase visitor usage, but also to “leverage the resources of the Library or economic development”. In addition, there is the “discovery” process that takes place at the Library and the “information and knowledge trails” that our users discover that can be marketed to bring awareness to our rich resources.

Director Mackevich then discussed our new and improved website that is more navigable and user friendly as a tool that can be used to market and increase awareness of the Library.

General discussion followed among the members about ways to increase awareness of our services and resources, suggestions included: possible exhibit of our political buttons (Board member Sautter); conducting an analysis of “who” uses our collections (Board member Ranjan); developing partnerships with colleges and universities (Board member Reardon); pursuing specific project-based relationships with colleges and universities (Board member Ranjan); developing private funding sources for the funding of fellowships and internships at the Library (Board member Meister); highlighting major collections with the aim of preparing articles or columns for publication in major journals in the field and establishing contacts and relationships with history departments (Board member Sautter). Finally, another suggestion included developing conferences that focus on under-utilized or little known collections in the library with support and partnerships from local university departments (Board member Ranjan)

This led to questions about our collection policy and a request to provide it to Board members; in addition, there was a request to have a list of current projects developed and provided to members as well. Director Mackevich noted that since 2007 the operating budget of the ALPL has experienced a 37% cut making it a challenge to maintain and/or expand services and/or staff.

Legal Counsel Garth Madison joined the meeting after lunch; he has been with IHPA for six months and he also welcomed the Board and thanked them for their service. He also asked whether or not the Library staff was actively recruiting collections, especially those from members of the General Assembly; he also asked about our collection policy as it regards these particular types of collections.

A tour of the Library followed Madison’s comments.

After the tour, the members then began discussion of future meeting dates and times. No calendar was established and the calendar of meetings of the IHPA Board was only illustrative. It was decided that having the Advisory Board and the IHPA Board meetings on the same day was not the best situation and would not happen again. Members suggested various options including avoiding winter weather in January-February; preferable days of the week with the idea that “non-teaching days” for those who are faculty members was best; mid-May appears to be a good time as the spring term is ended. It was noted that although four meetings per year were recommended, all agreed that if there was no need for four meetings, then four meeting would not be held. It was not decided whether the next meeting would be in September or

November. Most favored a meeting in September so that any momentum gained from this meeting and subsequent email communications re items/topics requested, would not be lost.

Topics that Board members desire to have additional information include the vision of the Library and “what” is a library of the 21st century and how the ALPL fits (or not) this description vis-à-vis other libraries, What initiatives will the Advisory Board put forward and recommend for action was another topic of interest to the members. Marketing and digitization of the Library collections appear to be the strongest topics of interest and concern to the Board members. It was agreed that Board members would receive a copy of the projects noted for funding by the Center for Digital Initiatives. It was also recommended that the staff conduct a review that will match our collections with the interests of stakeholders and grants agencies (Board member Ranjan).

With the suggestion that Board members forward to Teri Barnett recommended dates and times for Board meetings, whether in Chicago or Springfield, the first meeting of the Library Advisory Board adjourned at about 3:00pm.

Notes transcribed by: Teri Barnett

Please send corrections and/or additions to Teri Barnett: teri.barnett@illinois.gov or by phone at: 217-558-0126.