Summary of Liz Bishoff workshop, November 17, 2014

Liz Bishoff provides management consulting services to libraries, museums and other cultural heritage organizations. Bishoff is a renowned authority on library management, having held positions at university libraries and OCLC and consulted widely in the field of digital initiatives. She is a member of ALA Council and Board. Bishoff was engaged by VALID to work with us on organizational structure.

Bishoff told us that the library service platform (LSP) must have a sound structural foundation, but that, using the analogy of selling a house, this foundation is both not easily visible nor the part of the house used to sell it to a buyer. She said, at the outset, that finding a compelling message of value for both the internal library staff and the external group of college and university administrators, are important first steps to change.

Related to this is the relationship of the VALID project with VALE as a whole. VALID has the potential to serve as the consortium's R&D arm, with the work on OLE being a prototype. We must always be aware that VALE is composed of a range of institutions with a range of needs and abilities. One way of looking at the work of VALID is that it is focused on the 20% of our work that is considered "emerging" and how, as a consortium, we can transform ourselves.

For the active, participatory phase of the workshop, the attendees broke into four sections, each representing a hypothetical VALID organizational structure:

Highly structured – small organization	Highly structured – large organization
Unstructured – small organization	Unstructured – large organization

Each group discussed how their model would be organized in terms of: project purpose, role/responsibilities, technology, staffing, communication, space and facilities, governance, and finance. The afternoon was spent giving each group a turn to report on how their organization would be arranged. Finally, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was performed on each model. Inevitably, there were examples where a strength, weakness, etc. was shared by two or more models. There were clear differences between all the models, however.

At the conclusion of the exercise, each participant indicated which of the models seemed the most appropriate for VALID and "Highly structured – small organization" received the most votes. This straw poll was in no way intended to be anything other than an overall indication of which general structure seemed to be the best fit for our conditions in VALID. Such a small, yet highly structured organization was deemed best able to innovate and nimbly respond to the current volatile educational and IT environments. This model was felt to be cost effective, less risky, and able to pursue a variety of innovative projects.

Bishoff, in consultation with Grant, will provide her own report of the workshop outcomes, along with recommendations for organizational structure.

Thank you, again, to Grace Agnew for serving as primary recorder, floater, and facilitator of this workshop. Her skill at contextualizing and framing the conversation was indispensable. For the full version of Grace's notes of this workshop, click here.