

Note: This document is the earliest written record of conversations that led to creation of UMRA's Organizational Memory and Continuity Task Force.

Preserving UMRA's Organizational Documentation and Memory

Notes on a meeting of Jerry Rinehart and Chip Peterson, 7/8/19

A few issues we identified:

- A version of the UMRA Board has been meeting since 1976. We currently do not have an efficient means of identifying and/or accessing the Board's policy decisions. Related Issues:
 - Going backward:
 - How comprehensive [aggressive] should we be in trying to collect previous policy decisions and materials (e.g. from members' personal files/hard drives? from the U Archives?)
 - Going forward:
 - Where (in addition to monthly Board minutes) should policy decisions be kept? (What has happened to relevant technology since we retired? Are servers still used? Etc.)
 - In what format(s), and in what location(s), should we preserve electronic documents?
 - Who should have access to them?
 - If we develop a comprehensive digital storage system, should we still continue putting hard copies in the U Archives as well?
- Officers and Committee Chairs have institutional knowledge and memory that could be lost without some effort to efficiently capture this information. Related ideas:
 - Should we institute a system of "Understudies" for key positions?
 - For key positions should we develop "Crib sheets" containing key organizational issues, responsibility, deadlines, how-to tips, etc.?

A couple of bare-bones proposals:

- At the very least, UMRA should put policies on website, initially as simply another subsection within the UMRA Governance section; they could eventually be grouped into categories if numbers become unwieldy.
- We need some guidelines for developing documents (e.g., always include at date, authorship, at whom aimed).

Who should be on a task force to work through all of this?

Next step/decisions:

- Jerry will take a look at the UMRA section in the U Archives to see what's there and how it's organized.
- We will report on this meeting to Bill Donohue and suggest that he appoint a task force, or authorize us to do so, to dig more deeply into the issues and propose a plan.

Possible charge to a task force on maintaining continuity and organizational memory in UMRA:

An all-volunteer organization like UMRA faces particularly severe challenges concerning continuity and organizational memory. The proposed task force will deal with questions such as the following:

- How do we keep easily accessible records of policies passed by the UMRA board?
- Where, in what format, and dating back how far should digital records be kept?
- How can continuity be assured in key positions, particularly officers and committee chairs (e.g., through apprenticeships and/or more systematic written documentation)?

Continuity and Organizational Memory Work Group
Wednesday, November 13, 2019
10:30-12:00
409 Campus Club
Meeting Summary

Present: Richard Kelly, Chip Peterson (co-chair), Jerry Rinehart (co-chair), Carol Urness, Julia Wallace, Gloria Williams

Following a review of the C. Peterson document outlining the issues requiring our attention, we engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of the issues associated with UMRA's ability to efficiently record and, subsequently, access key policy decisions, and improve overall organizational effectiveness.

1. We reached clear agreement that the University Archives must remain a primary repository for all UMRA reports and documents.
 - a. It was noted that because archived materials are stored primarily in the manner in which they were received, they do not allow easy identification of related issues or provide cross-indexing that is often needed to explore specific issues or topics.
 - b. The quality of the UMRA Archives depend entirely on the commitment of UMRA leaders to providing annual summaries of their areas of activity (e.g. meeting minutes and attachments, Officer and Committee chair reports.) [See attached list of reports expected each year.] Should we develop standard templates for these reports?
2. We discussed the need for a set of "working documents" (with the most recent 5-10 years of materials) which should be retained in an easily accessible location—either (or both) on-line or in the organization's office in McNamara.
 - a. Included in this material should be a listing of all UMRA "policy statements." While meeting minutes are included on the UMRA website, neither the website nor the Archives provide easy access to the Attachments which are so often the key items sought.
 - b. We discussed the potential need for a "shared drive" or other digital storage space where the minutes, attachments, policy statements could be secured and accessed.
 - i. Rinehart indicated he will like ask Cathy Gierke to join our work group and inquire if there are other tech experts who might be helpful to us.
 - ii. Peterson indicated that UMRA materials, minutes and attachments are likely included in many members hard drives. Should we make an effort to collect this material for placement in a shared drive/storage space?

[Subsequent to the meeting, Rinehart reviewed the “Governance” section of the UMRA website (**see below**). The website is a rich source of organization history and operations, and it appears to be the appropriate place to house an UMRA “Policy Library.”]

3. We briefly discussed developing a standard template for policy documents.
 - a. Guidance on writing policy statements should be added to the Operational Documents.
 - b. We also had some discussion of the pros and cons of PDF vs. Word formats for key documents. PDF’s capture the “as discussed and passed” info, but the Word format allows easier cutting and pasting into other documents.
4. UMRA History documents currently end at 1983. This needs to be brought up to date. Suggestion: Could we find an UMRA member willing to submit a grant to PDGP focused on moving forward on the UMRA History document? Grant could include funding for a student worker(s) to provide significant assistance in the project.
5. In terms of continuity and transitions:
 - a. The issue of having “understudies” or back-ups for officers and committee chairs was raised, but not fully explored.
 - b. Expanding upon existing “crib sheets” and “how-to” documents to assist members new to their position is clearly desirable.
6. The group felt another meeting in early December would be helpful to further pursue these issues.

Quick Overview of UMRA Website Related to Organizational Continuity

The UMRA website has been significantly improved in recent years and does provide excellent access to many documents and historical records. The “Governance” section of the web has three sub-categories: Committees, History, and Document Archives

- a. **Committees**—current list with chairs and links to archival materials
- b. **History**—
 - Board members for the period 1993 to 2020
 - Written history of the early years of UMRA, from 1976 to 1983.
 - List of speakers hosted by UMRA from 2004 to 2020
 - Workshops hosted by UMRA for the period 2015 to 2020
 - Officers for the period 1992 to 2020
- c. **Document Archives**—
 - By-Laws, Memorandum of Understanding
 - Newsletters from October 2004;
 - Board meeting minutes from May 2015
 - Treasurer’s reports from 2015
 - Operational Document (with updates) from 2015
 - “Personnel”- Board members and Officers (including committee chairs, committee members, liaisons and representatives) from 1993

Potential follow up assignments:

Format for UMRA policy statements

Outline of resources available for updating the UMRA history since 1983: what are key events in UMRA’s recent history?

Review of Crib Sheets

18 February 2019

TO: Executive Committee
FROM: Jerry Rinehart and Chip Peterson
RE: Some preliminary thoughts about document storage

The Organizational Memory and Continuity Task force is striving to develop a system for handling documents of various kinds. This memo is to help structure the discussion.

Categories of documents

1. **One-time** (documents not requiring periodic updates):
 - Association minutes
 - Board minutes
 - Executive Committee minutes
 - Quarterly treasurer reports
 - Annual treasurer reports
 - Policies
 - Newsletters
 - Annual officer reports
 - Annual committee & rep/liaison reports
2. **Ongoing** (documents that need to be updated, in most cases annually or more often):
 - Bylaws
 - Operating Manual
 - Position guides
 - Toolkits for officers, committees, etc.
 - UMRA monthly speakers since 2004
 - UMRA workshops since 2015
 - UMRA officers since 1992
 - UMRA board members since 1993
 - UMRA personnel (current)
 - UMRA organizational diagram

Some questions for each type of document:

- Where and in what format(s) should it be kept?
- For those posted as PDFs on the website, which ones need to be kept somewhere in Word format as well? Where?
- Who should have access to which documents? (Some belong on the public website, some perhaps should be accessible to members only, and some might need to be still more restricted.)
- Who is responsible for developing/updating each document?
- How often should ongoing documents be updated?
- How do we assure documents on website are up to date? (Currently several are not.)
- What officer or other position should “ride herd” on the overall updating process?
- For which ongoing documents do we want earlier versions available on the website as well?

May 10, 2020; proposal for organization of document storage; Organizational Memory & Continuity Task Force

Proposed UMRA document organization

Below is a screen capture of the existing web Archive page, with proposed changes and additions, aligned with the Document Update changes of the Continuity Planning committee.

Governance page:

The Governance section of the website has information on current governance structures and personnel as well as documents related to governance. **The few most recent Minutes, Treasurer's reports and Operational Documents are found on the main governance page.** Subpages under Governance include Archives and History, as described below.

Archives page:

The screenshot shows the UMRA website's Document Archives page. The header includes the University of Minnesota logo and navigation links. The main content area is organized into four columns: Committees, Newsletter Archive, Minutes, and Treasurer's Reports. A fifth column, 'Operational Documents', is partially visible on the right. The 'Document Archives' section is highlighted in yellow. The 'Archives' section on the left lists various document types, including Past News & Events, Past Forums & Workshops, Past Program Summaries, Past Event Slides, Operating Documents Archives, Newsletter Archives, Photos, and UMRA History.

Figure 1: • Though most documents should probably be accessible to anyone, a few will require restrictions out of concerns for privacy. (Event Slides are also found on this page, but not shown here.)

Archived documents are organized into lists by document type, listed by date, with most recent at the top, labeled consistently for easy identification. The navigation list on the left links to other past documents, newsletters, photos, news articles, etc.

A new list item could be added to this page for a list of **Policy** documents.

May 10, 2020; proposal for organization of document storage; Organizational Memory & Continuity Task Force

The **membership directory** can be linked under the existing heading, **Operational Documents**, as a list item, but would link to a passworded page on the membership website, for security. These documents will be available to all members by logging into the membership website.

The new **Format Guide** or template, used to be sure key context such as date, topic, author and background is included in each document, should be prominently available for everyone, so it may be desirable to have it also in the list of **Operational Documents**. Or in the list of **Policies**.

UMRA Operational Guides:

This is a new section being proposed to hold those documents that are not of interest to the general membership of UMRA, but do not need secure storage. A new page can be created under Governance, called "Operational aids for officers, committees, and other UMRA personnel." The following lists are proposed to organize the material, and will be sorted by year, with most recent years at the top.

Documents expected to be store here are:

- **Position Toolkits** for each key position (officers, committee chairs, liaisons and representatives, webmaster, newsletter editor, database manager, biennial retreat organizing committee, etc.). Each toolkit will consist of tips for the position, as well as documents which serve as useful guides or templates or sources of historical information. For example, the Grants Committee might include in its toolkit a past Call for Proposals; the Program Committee, emails to prospective or committed speakers

Other position-related documents may be found that we want to store on this page.

Historical Operational Details:

There are many documents that have been important in the historical management of UMRA that may not need to be prominently available to all. These can be listed by category on a subpage under the Archives page. Other considerations include having a category for most recent of each types; subheaders by year/decade; etc. Categories identified so far are:

Annual Reports: from officers, reps/liaisons, committee chairs, etc.

Biennial retreat final reports

Member Survey Summaries

Board Packets: Minutes and attachments to the agenda for the monthly board meeting

Other

Secure page:

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For documents that should not be public a passworded page can be created on the UMRA website, with a single password known only to those who should have access,

At the present time, the only documents identified to need such security would be minutes of the Executive Committee

Lists:

Lists/folders	Document types	Naming standards
Photo Club Armchair Travelers Book Club Financial & Legal	Annual Reports Toolkits	If grouped by committee: YYYY Annual Report YYYY Toolkit
Volunteers		
Executive Committee Program Committee Workshop Committee Membership Committee Communications & Outreach Committee Luncheon Committee Nominating Committee PDGR Committee History Committee Social Activities Committee Travel Tours Committee UMRA Cares Committee Council of Past Presidents		
Liaison to Board of Regents; Representative to (and member of) Senate Comm. on Faculty Affairs (SCFA); Representative to (& member of) Senate Subcommittee on Retirement Plans; Representatives to (& members of) Health Care Benefits Advisory Committee; Representative to University Retirees Volunteer Center; Representative to Campus Club;		Group Liasons and Reps together? Rep SCFA Rep SSRP Rep HCBAC Rep URVC Rep CC

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Liaison to UM Alumni Association; Liaison to P&A Senate; Representative to Civil Service Senate; Representative <i>from</i> University Retirees Volunteer Center; Representatives <i>from</i> Provost's Office;		Lias UMAA Lias P&AS Rep CSS Rep from URVC Rep from PO
Surveys		YYYY topic
Retreat Report		YYYY Retreat
Other (Town Hall notes)		YYYY Title

Key Outcomes: Discussion of the Organizational Continuity Report
5/11/20

Meeting participants: Frank Cerra, Bill Donohue, Cathy Lee Gierke, Jean Kinsey, Kris Mortensen, Chip Peterson

1. To avoid the confusion and duplication of effort we experienced in the most recent updates of important documents, Gierke and Mortensen will create an organizational chart of the UMRA website, identifying appropriate “owners” of content areas and the documents therein. This chart will clarify the individual(s) within each area responsible for working with the Webmaster and Communication Coordinator to maintain the accuracy of website materials. There was general agreement on the value of “Google Docs” for shared updating of documents.
2. We need to specify timeframes for updating key documents such as the Operating Manual and the Personnel document, and state clear deadlines for annual submission of reports from Officers, Committee Chairs, Interest Group and Club coordinators. A related suggestion was the creation of a table identifying documents needing updating, timeframe for the updates, and individuals responsible for the updates.
3. It was suggested that perhaps members of the Communications Committee could be assigned for periodic monitoring of the website to insure currency and accuracy. It was noted that the President is likely to be aware of organizational changes or activities that need to be reflected on the website and should be participate in this monitoring. More thorough review of the site should occur every three years or so—this is a major undertaking and usually involves reconciliation of wildly differing perspectives on design etc.
4. There is interest in developing a system of back-ups, understudies, apprentices or associates for key those in key positions. Implementing this is not simple. A start might be to insert this idea in the call for annual reports from chairs etc. (i.e. ask current leaders to give thought to identifying their successors).
5. Chip will circulate versions of “position guides” and “tool kits” for us to review and determine if we should encourage/require development of these for all key positions. It was noted that some prefer person-to-person orientation to their positions. The important issue is that critical activities and responsibilities are effectively conveyed to those new to their positions.
6. No opposition to moving forward with addition to the website of meeting materials, annual reports, directories etc.
7. There was strong support for establishing a “Policy” section on the website. Questions arose about organization and searchability, but this should have high priority.

Note: During the course of the 2019–20 UMRA year, the Organizational Memory and Continuity Task Force developed numerous successive drafts of the following document, this being the most recent. The final report to go to the board in the fall will be more streamlined, but we are including this in the task force’s toolkit for historical purposes and to assure its content is accessible in case some of it is needed for other document in the future.

–Jerry Rinheart and Chip Peterson, task force co-chairs, 8/28/20

Draft of 15 JUNE 2020

[Date to be inserted here]

TO: UMRA Board of Directors

FROM: Organizational Memory and Continuity Task Force:

- Cathy Gierke, (651) 208-8402, leegi001@umn.edu
- Kris Mortensen, (612) 360-9962, kristinemortensen@gmail.com
- Chip Peterson, (651) 699-4286, c-pete@umn.edu
- Jerry Rinehart, (612) 802-6527, g-rine@umn.edu
- Carol Urness, (612) 770-2468, curness@msn.com
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RE: **Organizational memory and continuity issues: Report and recommendations**

The Organizational Memory and Continuity Task Force has been dealing with numerous interrelated issues. Many of these, though not all, have concerned management of documents, including selection of apps and platforms for user-friendly document storage, retrieval and updating. UMRA’s website provides the background for many of these questions, and we assume you have some familiarity with its current content and organization.

This report lays out our recommendations. We will welcome your feedback; see phone numbers and email addresses above. We will then request your approval at the September board meeting. In the meantime, for this summer’s document submissions and updates we have been functioning within its parameters.

The memo is organized as follows:

- **Part I: Introduction.** Reviews the reasons that led to creation of the task force.
- **Part II: Documents Currently on UMRA Website.** Offers a categorization and lists documents.
- **Part III. Document Storage Processes.** Outlines additional issues and recommendations regarding access, accuracy, updating, storage, and responsibility for materials.
- **Part IV: Document Storage Technology.** Discusses technological/software issues and options associated with creation, updating, and storing documents.

Part I: Introduction

In any volunteer-run association, and especially one with UMRA's demographics, turnover is rapid and organizational amnesia rampant. Past policy decisions are forgotten; how-to expertise is lost as positions turn over; there are large gaps in the written record; and organization of those records that do exist is sometimes haphazard.

From what we have been able to glean, UMRA is doing better in this respect than many counterpart retiree associations. For example, a good deal of history is available on our website, especially in the form of past newsletters and Board minutes. A much more complete paper record spanning our entire existence resides in the University Archives, although, of course, information there is very labor-intensive to tap. Our annually-updated Operating Manual helps pass on procedures and division of labor from one cohort to another. Orientation sessions for new Board members are a helpful recent addition.

Many issues drove the formation of the task force. Important documents, even recent, sometimes exist only in the Archives as hard copy and on individual members' hard drives—if even that. The value of some documents is diminished for lack of contextual information (e.g., dates, authorship). Little is available in writing about how to accomplish specific tasks, and training of new occupants in key positions is generally hit-and-miss. Apart from the president-elect/president/past-president sequence, there is no system of understudies. A sudden death or disability could create chaos in some areas of operation. And pivotally, there is still no consensus about what digital records are needed, where and in what format to keep them, and who should have access to which documents.

Part II: Documents Currently on UMRA Website

All of the following are publicly accessible on the website. We have found it useful to group them into three categories according to certain updating and storage issues.

Category 1: Completed documents. Such documents are normally final and not to be revised in the future. They are stored on our website as PDFs. Operationally this is the easiest category to deal with, as there is no need to update these documents; once on the website they can simply stay there. With the exception of the last listed, each of the following is arranged on the website in reverse chronological order:

- Association minutes
- Board minutes
- Annual finance reports
- Newsletters
- "From the President" newsletter columns
- Event slides
- UMRA's Early Years 1976-1983

Category 2: Cumulative documents. This is a term we have coined for documents that are appended periodically. Previous years' versions need not be preserved because all the information on them will be on the current version. Compared with Category 1, however, this category requires some

decisions. On what platform and in what app should a “master” of a document be kept so as to permit updating with a minimum of hassle? Who should be responsible for the updates? Who else, if anyone, should have access to the master document? How do we prevent accidental deletion or simultaneous edits by different people? Past documents may serve as a backup if the current document is compromised. (Past versions are stored on the web page Archive currently.) The following documents currently on the website belong to this category:

- UMRA monthly speakers since 2004
- UMRA workshops since 2006
- UMRA officers since 1992
- UMRA board members since 1993

Category 3: Periodically revised documents. We have coined this term for documents that go through periodic revisions, or editions, whether involving minor changes or substantial overhaul; think telephone directories or course catalogs. Periodically revised documents share with Cumulative documents the issues outlined in Category 2 concerning the updating process, but they present another as well: Where on the website should older editions be preserved? The following documents fit into this category:

- Bylaws
- Operating Manual
- UMRA Personnel
- Memorandum of Understanding with the U of M
- UMRA Organizational Diagram 2018

Part III: Document Storage Processes

A) Management of document updating

- **Recommendation: Updating schedule.** Most documents should be reviewed at least annually, normally between June and September, to determine if updates are needed. In some cases events might dictate further amendments during the year as well. A few documents, such as the bylaws or the agreement with the university, are amended less regularly.
- **Recommendation: Document updating coordinator(s).** UMRA needs to designate one or more individuals to coordinate the entire process by reminding document owners of specifications and timelines for updating their pieces, making sure the most recent document is used for the update and that all updates are coordinated if there are multiple editors, and subsequently by nagging laggards. It might be possible to phase out the coordination role once we have “baked in” these responsibilities.
- **Recommendation: Document ownership.** Each document should have an unambiguous “owner.” This is the person responsible for creating or revising the document (although often in consultation with others, e.g., a committee chair with other committee members). This responsibility should be part of an orientation to his/her position. The webmaster should accept a document for posting only if the source document used was correct, and the update comes from its designated owner. Cathy Gierke and Kris Mortensen have drafted an Excel document listing documents and their owners, updating schedule, etc.
- **Ownership of UMRA-wide documents.** For most documents it is fairly intuitive to decide who should be the owner: committee chairs for committee materials, the secretary for minutes,

the treasurer for financial reports, representatives and liaisons for materials related to their positions, etc. We believe, however, that *a few duty assignments merit Board discussion*. Probably the most painstaking summer updates are of the Operating Manual and the Personnel document.

- **Recommendation: Operating Manual.** The outgoing president, with the assistance of the incoming president, should serve as the owner of the Operating Manual for purposes of the annual summer updating, because s/he knows more about how the organization works, and how operations could be improved, than any other member. Beginning in the fall, after the annual update, the new president should assume ownership.
- **Recommendation: Personnel Document.** The incoming president should own the UMRA Personnel Document, update it during the summer and continue to serve as owner during the subsequent program year. The necessary summer conversations with incumbents and the making of new appointments impart useful knowledge for directing the organization in the upcoming year.
- **Recommendation: Documenting updating process.** Roles, responsibilities, and timelines for the annual update should be outlined in the Operating Manual and developed in greater detail in supplemental instructional materials. The process coordinator(s), working closely with the outgoing and incoming presidents, should take the leadership in developing this process documentation.

B) University Archives. The Archives contain large quantities of UMRA material, in the form of hard copies, dating from the organization's very inception.

- **Recommendation: Commitment to the Archives.** The online document storage system discussed in this report should in no way weaken UMRA's commitment to add annually to the paper records in the Archives.
- **Recommendation: Responsibility for Archives contribution.** The History Committee should continue its lead role in preparing the Archives contribution, including decisions about how to organize the papers being submitted. That organization need not mirror that of UMRA's online document storage, even though the digital and paper collections will include many of the same documents.
- **Recommendation: Coordinating summer document gathering.** To minimize duplication of effort, the summer processes for gathering documents for the website and for the Archives contribution should be coordinated as closely as feasible. Webmaster Cathy Lee Gierke and History Committee Gloria Williams are currently working on a proposal for implementing this recommendation.
- **Recommendation: Choosing documents for Archives submission.** The paper contributions to the Archives need not be limited to those documents being posted on the website. Such items as presidential papers, key correspondence, committee minutes, etc., will frequently be included in materials for the Archives. The History Committee should work with the process coordinator(s) to assure that the guidelines to officers and committee chairs take this need into account..

C) Managing website information. (Communications Committee serves as the process owner.)

- **Recommendation: Content monitoring.** A subset of the Communications Committee should monitor the website regularly for currency and accuracy. The President, who is likely to be

aware of organizational changes or activities, should participate in this monitoring as part of his/her role as process sponsor..

- **Recommendation: Systematic review.** We recommend that the Communications Committee, or a task force named by it, review the website more systematically every three years or so and recommend any changes in layout or content that could improve clarity and user-friendliness.

D) Recommendations: Existing documents that merit placement on the website. The following materials, none of which is currently on the website, should be stored online:

- **Board meeting materials.** Several board members and officers have observed that minutes can be inadequate in themselves to convey what transpired in a meeting, because they often just cross-reference attachments where the meat of an issue is laid out. We recommend that agendas and all attachments be placed on the website in meeting-specific lists organized chronologically; or have each meeting minutes and attachments stored together as a single document for easy reference. Search allows details to be found within meeting documents. (Storage structure for new docs is as yet undefined.)
- **Annual reports.** Whether these come from officers, reps/liaisons, committee chairs, or whatever, we'd like to see these added to the website. (We're inclined to think these should be organized by year and within it by function--committees, officers, etc.--but a not-unreasonable alternative would be to organize by function and then, within each function, by year.)
- **UMRA membership directories.** These are created every year or two in PDF form from the membership database and distributed by the membership committee to members as email attachments. A time series list of them on the website would be useful for studying UMRA's history. However, privacy concerns mean that, just as members must log in to use the membership database itself, so also should they in order to access present or past membership directories.
- **Final reports from biennial retreats.** A few of these probably exist on hard drives of current members; we should capture as many of them as we can and then add a new contribution after each future retreat.
- **Summaries of member survey results.** Similarly, we can probably recover some of these from current members.
- **Other important one-time documents.** It might be worth establishing a separate list/page on the website for documents that do not fit into categories but are important enough to merit preservation. One example that occurs to us would be the summary notes that came out of the town hall meeting of Oct. 2017. (There may or may not be a future event of this nature, but the member feedback captured in the notes seems worth preserving)

E) Recommendations: Additional documents:

- **Position toolkits.** We recommend that spaces be created on the website for officers, committees, etc., to store documents that can serve as useful guides or templates or sources of historical information. For example, the Membership Committee might include in its toolkit a past Call for Proposals; the Program Committee, guidelines for newsletter articles on upcoming programs; the President, a suggested timeline for the year's typical tasks. Toolkits should not be mandatory, and the number of documents in each would be entirely up to the individual or body it is designed to serve. But it is important that the space be available so that such tools are not inadvertently lost from one year to the next.

- **UMRA policies (for updating whenever new policies are added or old ones modified).** We propose creating a new page/list on the website to house as separate documents as many Board-approved policies as we can find through review of minutes. New policies should be added as they are approved. We are developing, and plan to submit to the Board for its consideration, a proposed format for policies. We believe such documents could be an important tool for future UMRA officers and Boards. Documents can be found by search.
- **Document guidelines (to update as needed).** We recommend the Board adopt some loose format guidelines to assure that documents will make sense to future historians. (For example, might all documents be expected to include date, authorship, to whom directed, subject, and relevant background?) Such guidelines might be included in an annual UMRA leadership orientation, and a template stored on the website for easy reference..
- **Other documents.** It might be useful at a Board meeting or the summer retreat to solicit suggestions for other documents that merit posting.

F) Access to documents on website

- All of the existing documents discussed in Part II are public; anyone in the world can read them. We think that is appropriate and recommend no changes.
- Google Custom Search Engine (GSCE) is a highly flexible search tool for finding online documents. Instructions for its use are included on the archives page.
- The website should not become cluttered to the point of dysfunction. It might be appropriate to distinguish between documents of potential interest to the general membership, as are most of those currently posted on the website, and those which are mainly to facilitate UMRA's management (such as policies and toolkits), which could be tucked into a separate corner of the website with a heading like, "Operational aids for officers, committees, and other UMRA personnel." Also, older versions of documents should be moved to the historical section of the website; only current versions should be more prominent.
- There is also the question of what to do with previous versions of Periodically Revised documents. For the UMRA Operating Manual only the current edition is normally needed. Yet some documents, just like old telephone directories or old course catalogs, have potential value as historical sources. Which merit preservation on the website? For which should we depend only on the University Archives for their preservation? Can those we do leave online be tucked into some unobtrusive subsection of the historical archive section? Only the present version should be at all prominent.
- Though most documents should probably be accessible to anyone, a few will require restrictions out of concerns for privacy or, as in the case of Executive Committee minutes, to encourage freewheeling discussion and off-the-wall thinking in meetings..

G) Recommendation: Associate positions. Discontinuities in some positions could be extremely disruptive to UMRA's operations. We recommend that UMRA encourage the recruitment of an associate to selected positions. By actively assisting the position occupant, the associate could learn the ropes sufficiently to be able to take over if necessary. Although this would be helpful for any position, including committee chairs, it seems a particular priority for database manager, membership committee chair, webmaster, and newsletter editor.

Cumulative documents and Revised documents alike require periodic updating, whether just by addition (Cumulative documents) or by document-wide revisions (Periodically Revised documents). A system for storing and updating documents depends on technology as well as human processes. The human processes will depend on the technology selected, or vice versa, so need to be considered together. The technologies are discussed in this section, and the processes above in section III, but they are dependent on each other.

- We need to agree upon a plan for documents storage. A clear organizational structure will make documents easier to find. But regardless of how clear the structure is, keyword search should also be a part of the storage/retrieval system.
- Master documents that are publicly accessible should be stored as PDFs for reliable reproduction across platforms.
- Multiple options exist for editing PDF documents, or for converting documents from PDF to an editable format. The latest Office allows this. PDFelement allows editing all types of documents (\$69). (Free converters were not reliable across documents.)
- Having multiple copies of the same document can cause confusion about which is the master doc, unless a clear structure exists to identify which is the most recent.
- To assure that the organizational structure retains its clarity even as the website grows and evolves, one individual may need to assume a coordinating role.

We considered several options for creating, editing, storing and retrieving UMRA documents. These are discussed below.

We note, however, regardless of the storage method we select, Google Docs can be used for team updating of documents. Google Docs is available to anyone with a Gmail or UMN account. It is widely used, and an effective way to both manage edits from multiple editors and avoid multiple copies of a document being emailed around for updates. A single online version of the document tracks changes from multiple editors at once, with comments, for a streamlined experience

Option 1: Master document in any format, storage in Google Drive

This is essentially the alternative that Trenton Raygor urged upon us.

Advantages:

- Google Drive is integrated with Google Docs, allowing easy online team editing of documents, to avoid merging multiple edits.
- Different access can be given to different users.

Disadvantages:

- Google Drive may not be familiar to many of our UMRA volunteers.
- Google Custom Search Engine commands would need to be learned for efficient search.
- We would need to plan an organization scheme, and communicate it.
- Someone would need to oversee it, upload documents, and manage permissions.
- We would need to decide if we store ALL our documents on Drive, or only those that are not already on the web. A great many of our most important documents are already on the web, and that process is mostly in place and working. Duplicate documents can cause confusion.

- We would need to maintain two systems, Drive and the Drupal website, as we will continue to want minutes, treasurer's reports, operations documents, and others to remain on the website where they are easily found.
- Folder storage is loose and easily becomes messy when multiple people have access.
- Assuming a central account (UMRA) is used to store documents, others can still share documents with that account, mistakenly thinking they are placing the document properly. Documents would need to be uploaded through logging into that one account.
- If people share documents with an UMRA Google Drive, when those individuals leave, the document is still owned by the individual. If they should then choose to delete documents they shared (without realizing the impact), we lose the documents (unless other additional steps are taken for each document –and it is difficult to see whether this step has been applied yet or not).
- People wishing to view existing documents will need to have View access. For secured documents, when someone leaves, that access will need to be removed. This is an additional process to be managed, and a key one.

Option 2: Master document in PDF format, storage on UMRA website

As part of an annual update, the coordinator will send a link to document owners and will advise or assist on how to convert or edit their materials. The coordinator will also accept the newly updated documents for uploading to the web according to agreed-upon procedures.

Advantages:

- No need for volunteers to learn an unfamiliar tool.
- Different access can be assigned to different documents (for secure access).
- No need to design a second method for storing documents, as all would be together on the website.
- No need to maintain and manage two systems.
- Storage, permissions, organization would continue to be done by webmaster. No additional volunteer or process is needed.
- A very structured organization can be maintained on the website. The website structure enforces agreed upon structure of storage, and it doesn't shift accidentally over time.
- Easy to find the latest master documents.
- Because of structure, it is easy to see which documents are there and which are not.

Disadvantages:

- Google Custom Search Engine commands would need to be learned for efficient search and retrieval of documents.
- PDF editing is preferred, but if it is not an option for the editor, conversion from PDF is an extra step, and the converted document needs to be carefully reviewed for correct conversion. (The coordinator can advise or perform the conversion).

Option 3: Master documents on individual computers in Word/Excel/etc. format

Currently many UMRA documents are stored only on individual computers (for example, each committee chair may keep the documents for his or her committee), but we should add systematic backups.

Perhaps, for example, one UMRA officer could be charged with collecting and printing all documents being sent at the end of the year to the University Archives. That person would organize the digital documents on his/her computer and print them out for the Archives submission but also copy them to a flash drive and have other officers make backup copies. Of the four options, this one requires the least change, but it has the disadvantage of being more cumbersome to keep working smoothly.

Advantages:

- Requires the least change from what we are doing at present.
- Eliminates the need to convert documents from PDF back to the original version.

Disadvantages:

- We have no central Master copy, allowing for possible confusion about which is our most recent document.
- Maintenance of the system would depend on the follow-through of the officer responsible for gathering the documents and getting them to the other officers. Everything could fall apart in a year when the responsible officer lacks sufficient OCD traits.
- Documents are not available to others for reference when needed.
- Documents could be easily lost in role transitions

Option 4: Hybrid of Option 2 & Option 3

Many documents are “central” – there is one for all of UMRA. Others are owned by committees or subgroups. Option 2 is probably the best option for “central” documents. But Option 3 may be the more practical and preferred option for committees and subgroups.

Past years’ documents could be stored on the web. To take as an example the Program Committee toolkit, after completing the 2020 toolkit and sending its component documents to the webmaster, the committee chair would duplicate the "Program Committee toolkit 2020-21" folder on her or his hard drive, rename it "Program Committee toolkit 2021-22--drafts," and make parallel changes in all the filenames for the Word/Excel/etc., documents within it. During the subsequent year the chair could revise each draft piecemeal as ideas strike. When it's time for the annual revision during the summer of 2021, some or even most of the work may already be done. The chair then completes the update, sends the new PDFs to the webmaster, and starts the next round, with another duplication and renaming of folders and their documents.

This has all the same advantages and disadvantages of Options 2 & 3, but also allows committees and subgroups flexibility. And it reduces vulnerability to a major computer breakdown, or loss.

Comment: The threat of the current system to discontinuity due to death, disability, departure, etc., is that too many of our documents are stored only on individuals’ hard drives. Any of the four options listed here can address this threat if far more documents are stored in a central location, whether GoogleDrive or the website—and none of them can do so if we continue to have so many important documents in scattered locations.

Recommendation: Based on what we have learned so far, we are strongly inclined to Option 4.

Note: This much-abbreviated memo (compared with previous drafts) was included in materials sent to participants in the 2020 UMRA leadership retreat, held 25 August 2020.

--Jerry Rinehart and Chip Peterson, task force co-chairs

13 August 2020

TO: Retreat participants

FROM: Cathy Lee Gierke
Chip Peterson
Jerry Rinehart

RE: **Implementing the Organizational Continuity and Memory proposal**

This memo describes the proposed record-keeping system and offers guidance for submitting end-of-year reports and other key materials—both to improve the year-to-year running of UMRA and to enhance the scope and accessibility of its historical record. Please read carefully; it affects the majority of retreat participants. Most of you have recently received the email calls for submission from Cathy Lee Gierke and Gloria Williams that are described in this document.

The larger report of our task force includes several other recommendations not covered here, such as the compilation of a policy library, cross-training of backups for selected positions, and oversight of the process by the Communication and Outreach Committee. Here we have focused just on what you need to know for the dimensions we will be discussing at the retreat, i.e., the task of selecting/updating/submitting materials this summer.

Key points about this new system

In developing this initiative, a guiding principle has been to make the system as user-friendly as possible for those responsible for developing, updating, and submitting documents. The following summarizes:

- Each document or type of document will have a designated “owner” responsible for its management. See “Document Update Roles” Excel sheet for list of owners; the Operating Manual will also list documents each role is responsible to update.
- Documents will be stored as hard copies at the University Archives, and as digital PDF files on the website (with some exceptions).
- Two important new sets of documents are to be added to what we have done in the past: a “Toolkit” for each position or committee, and a collection of board-approved policies. Some existing documents not currently on the website will also be added to online documents storage, including board meeting packets, survey results, biannual

retreat reports, and other important historical documents. A home will be created on the website for each of these document types. More below.

- During the latter part of the summer, the webmaster (currently Cathy Lee Gierke) will send an email notice requesting document updates from document owners. Updates will be sent as email attachments to the Webmaster (currently Cathy Lee Gierke).
- The Historian will decide which documents need to be printed for archiving, and UMRA will get them printed.
- To avoid using documents from people's hard drives, where provenance is unknown, the PDF on the website will serve as the "official" source document for any future rounds of updating, with the exception of position and committee Toolkits, which may be kept by the owner and updated as needed.

Instructions for submitting documents

When the request for updates is sent to document and web page owners in late summer it, will include a link to the document to be updated, and instructions for making updates. The webmaster will assist with document conversion where necessary.

Preparing/updating documents: Please use recommended format guidelines (below) for creating new documents. For updating documents, the original on the webpage is to be used as the source document for the update. If the owner does not have access to convert the web page pdf to an editable format, or to edit it in pdf, the webmaster will assist with conversion to an editable format and afterward from editable format to pdf.

Many documents or web pages are also updated during the year. This process does not change these normal updates, but it does assure that our full set of operational documents are updated regularly (see "Document Update Roles" Excel document).

Document format guidelines: UMRA currently has no template or required format for documents. However, the following are essential for all documents:

- Title or Subject line (all documents)
- Date (all documents)
- From: Author. (There may be documents, such as Bylaws, where no author is needed.)
- To: (audience). In many cases this is important.
- Other contextual information when needed to make the document meaningful to the uninitiated reader or to a future historian. For example, a document proposing a new policy or a new initiative ought to include a brief outline of the issues or needs that have led to it.
- To avoid confusion among versions, minutes should be labeled either "Pending Approval" or "Approved."

Submitting documents; Owners will send their documents as email attachments both to the Historian (currently Gloria Williams) and to the webmaster (currently Cathy Lee Gierke), who will accept material only from the designated document owner. *Deadline:* September 1.

Getting a head start: The webmaster's call for submissions will list the documents for which each recipient is responsible. You can avoid a late-summer crunch by referencing the "Document Update Roles" Excel sheet or the Operating Manual to determine which documents you are responsible for updating.

Addendum: Why this initiative?

In any volunteer-run association, and especially those made up of retirees, turnover is rapid and organizational amnesia problematic. Past policy decisions are easily forgotten; how-to expertise is lost as positions turn over; large gaps occur in written records; organization of those records that do exist is often haphazard; and important documents may reside only on individual members' hard drives. The sudden death or disability of a key figure can cause considerable disarray.

UMRA is probably better off than most of its counterparts in this respect. A good deal of history is available on our website, especially in the form of past newsletters and Board minutes. A much more complete paper record spanning our entire existence resides in the University Archives (although, of course, information there is labor-intensive to tap). Our annually-updated Operating Manual helps pass on procedures and division of labor from one cohort to another. Orientation sessions for new Board members are a helpful recent addition.

To build further on these strengths, as one of UMRA's major initiatives this year a Task Force on Organizational Memory and Continuity has been working with the board to design a process and guidelines for more extensive and systematic online storage of key documents.

Appendix: More on Position Toolkits

What are Toolkits?

The Operating Manual outlines the duties of each key UMRA position. Toolkits in turn are collections of materials that can help you or your successor carry out those duties for your position.

The content of a Toolkit is entirely up to the position's occupant. Some will include many files, others few. The number of files will likely grow with time as new occupants add more tools to the collection inherited from predecessors.

The following are examples of items that might be included in a Toolkit:

- "How-to" guides to a position
- Workflow calendars (tasks done at specific times of the year)
- Templates for, or examples of, recurring document types or email messages

The content of a Toolkit is entirely up to the position's occupant. Some will include many items, others few. The number of items will likely grow with time as new occupants add more tools to the collection inherited from predecessors. Checking out other toolkits on the website from time to time may generate ideas for what to include in your own.

To submit your toolkit for posting on the website, please arrange its items in a logical order and then consolidate all of them into a single document. Add a cover memo listing the included items and describing briefly the function of each.

A suggestion for updating your Toolkit in future years

Each document owner will devise a his or her process for updating the Toolkits. Some might find the following worth consideration:

- On your hard drive, keep all of your Toolkit items in a folder whose title includes the year. For example, the folder for the Toolkit you will submit at the end of this summer will be called, "[Position] Toolkit 2020-21." Include 2020-21 in file name for each document within that folder as well.
- After you have sent the toolkit's component documents to the Webmaster and the Historian, duplicate the folder, rename the new folder "[Position] Toolkit 2021-22 drafts," and change the year in each document filename within it as well.
- To avoid confusion between older and current versions, now store the 2020-21 folder in a folder named something like, "Toolkits—old."
- Throughout the 2020-21 year you can now draft new documents, and revise existing documents piecemeal, as ideas strike you.
- When it's time for the annual revision during the summer of 2021, you may already have accomplished much of the work to be done. You can then complete the update, send the new pdfs to the webmaster, and start the next round with another duplication and renaming of folders and their component files.