To: Executive Board  
From: Funding Task Force  
Date: 21 March 2014

The Funding Task Force was established at the end of 2013, pursuant to Strategic Goal 2 (Budget/Financial) of the LALINC/LOUIS Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 providing for the creation of "a sustainable financial model" for LALINC/LOUIS, including to “Develop a business plan to provide sustainable funding for services, resources, systems and support” (Objective 2.1) and “Collaborate on grant and other funding and partnership opportunities” (Objective 2.2) implemented by the “Appoint[ment] a Funding Task Force to investigate foundations, state, and federal agencies that might provide funding for LOUIS activities and resources” (Action item).

A series of productive January-February meetings with LOUIS Executive Director Sara Zimmerman, LALINC Executive Board Chair Wendy Johnson, and the LALINC Executive Board appears to have determined that, until clarified or modified by the Louisiana Board of Regents:

• Although conceived by LALINC, LOUIS was implemented as and remains a unit of Louisiana State University … though swiftly assuming the name of the service it was, and is, providing (i.e., a Louisiana online university information system); and,
• LALINC is only an advisory body … separate from but linked to LOUIS and without any past or present financing authority or mechanism, other than any provided by LOUIS (currently membership dues, grant-raising, and funding requests to the Board of Regents).

As a manageable multi-step process that plans for and uses one or more of five fundraising vehicles … i.e., annual dues, major gift campaigns, grant-raising, special events, and estate planning initiatives … fund-raising can be only as effective as the organizational structure of the institution served supports.

LALINC's current existence as an advisory partnership severely limits its ability to raise funds for LOUIS, esp., since LALINC was not even employed as the principal investigator to obtain the grant that initially funded LOUIS. LALINC could become a significant fund-raising association serving LOUIS, but such would seem to require bringing the Board of Regents (if not the three University Systems and LSU) into the
conversation ... with the reasonable expectation that any fund-raising authority would be severely limited, so as not to compete with LSU and Louisiana’s other public universities.

Until LALINC’s organizational structure is so clarified or modified by the Louisiana Board of Regents as to empower it to act as a nonprofit parent of or foundation for LOUIS, the effectiveness of the LALINC Funding Task Force appears substantially limited: having only grant-raising and special events for LOUIS available to it … the former being restricted by the current inclination of grant-makers to fund innovative initiatives (rather than staffing for or purchases by established programs) and the latter requiring LALINC-wide initiatives of a sort unfamiliar to many/most academic libraries (e.g., annual “Love LOUIS” wine-&-cheese parties or balls held on the same day by all LALINC libraries).

Through its Funding Task Force or otherwise, LALINC can, and should, always be a vigorous champion for LOUIS: (1) in LALINC’s respective academic institutions for the maintenance and increase of membership dues; (2) before the Board of Regents, Louisiana’s Governor, and the State Legislature for adequate LOUIS funding; and, (3) in the public arena educating Louisiana’s businesses and residents on the valuable service LOUIS provides them all … as LOUIS has already shown LALINC the way.

The Funding Task Force awaits direction from or through the LALINC Executive Board on the following matters:

• As soon as LOUIS, other LALINC Task Forces, and individual LALINC libraries provide the Funding Task Force with requests for necessary or convenient additional programming, resources, and the like all LALINC libraries can use, the Funding Task Force can proceed to seek available grant funding to be requested through LOUIS for such needs; and,

• Should the Funding Task Force pursue whether or not special events might be an agreeable fund-raising vehicle for LALINC.

The Funding Task Force will determine if there might be other nonprofit organizations able and willing to serve as a fund raising-and-distribution foundation for LALINC.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Bremer
Funding Task Force Chair, 2013-2014