

New Policy and Governance Structure for ATA Divisions

By Dorothee Racette

Divisions have long played an important part in the activities of ATA and can look back on considerable membership growth. The governance structure of divisions was originally established in the 1980s and 1990s, and called for division management tasks to be split between a division administrator and an assistant administrator. Division dues, which used to be collected separately from ATA membership dues, ranged from \$5 to \$30 and covered the expense of sending out printed newsletters. With the increasing use of electronic resources such as websites and mailing lists, division dues were abolished in 2006 because the expenditures of division communication had decreased drastically. This led to an explosive growth of division membership (see Figure 1 on page 11). Today, ATA has 16 divisions which have grown into valuable networks that provide a wide range of benefits to members, and represent one of the most important reasons for membership in the Association.

ATA's new Governing Policy for Divisions brings together the best practices of all divisions.

Because ATA divisions typically form strong communities and are frequently a member's "home" within the Association, they are important value drivers that often shape new members' impressions of the entire organization. Due to the revolutionary changes in communication technology and the membership growth that had occurred since the establishment of ATA's first divisions, the governance structure of ATA's divisions was in need of a thorough update.

In an effort to provide continuity in running the divisions, as well as to ease some of the pressure on division leaders by distributing the workload and streamlining the governance structure

of divisions, ATA's Board has developed a new Governing Policy for Divisions. The new policy applies to all divisions and replaces individual division bylaws. This policy brings together the best practices of all divisions.

At a special meeting held in Alexandria, Virginia, in April 2011, representatives of 15 divisions discussed the policy in detail and talked about its effective implementation. Prior to the meeting, four divisions (the Science & Technology, Korean Language, French Language, and Spanish Language Divisions) had been asked in early 2011 to explore the most significant change—the formation of a Leadership Council—as a

pilot project. Their reports on the experience helped clarify how the new policy would work in practice.

This article summarizes the most important changes for divisions resulting from the new policy, which will formally take effect at this year's ATA Annual Conference, October 26-29, in Boston, Massachusetts.

Leadership Councils

The most significant innovation is the introduction of a Leadership Council for each division, which will share the workload associated with increased membership and ensure the future of the division. This larger group of volunteers will consist of 3 to 10 division members (depending on the division's resources) and will be headed by the division administrator and assistant administrator. Members of the

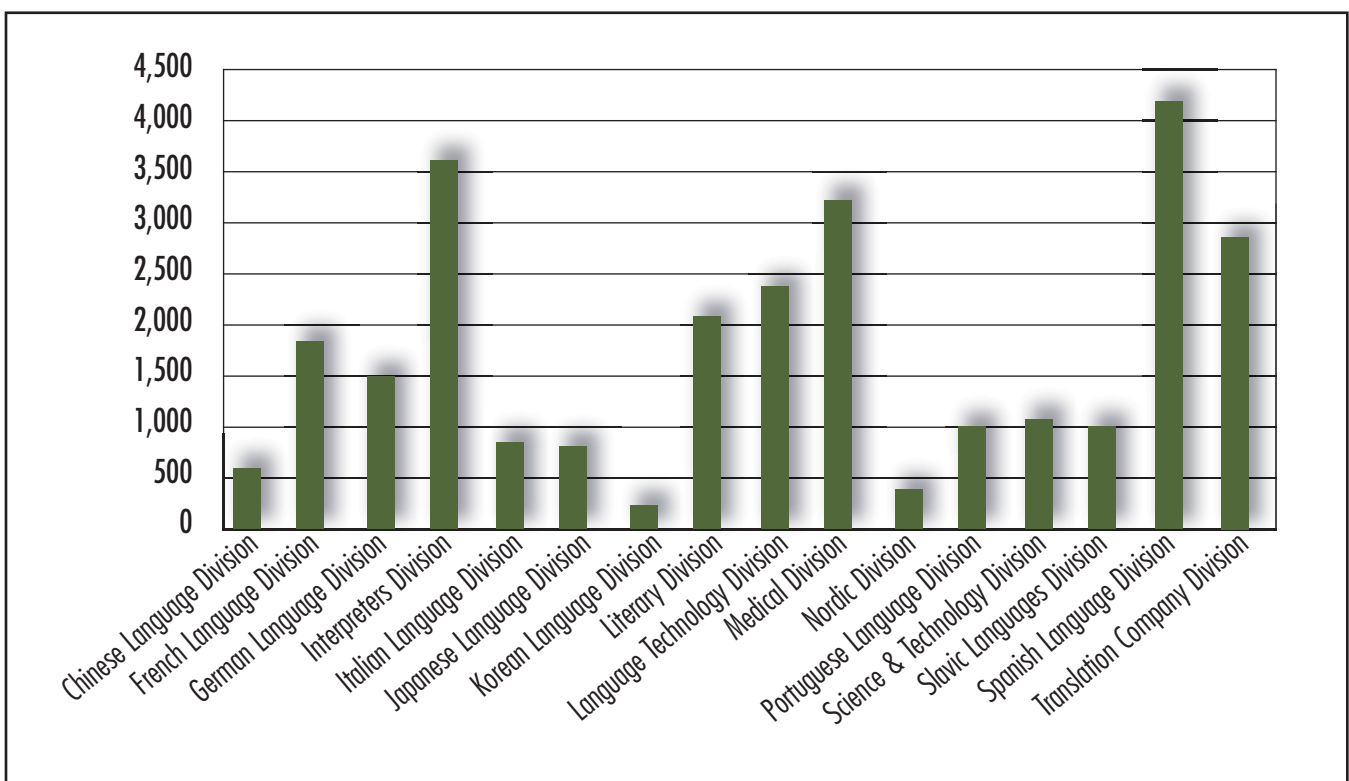
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Leadership Council will serve by annual invitation of the division administrator. The councils will provide an opportunity to involve interested new volunteers without necessarily requiring them to serve as officers. The councils will also provide a role to past leaders in order to take advantage of their institutional knowledge. It is hoped that the councils will produce more volunteers who have leadership experience. Members of the Leadership Council, which includes the assistant administrator, will be assigned specific tasks

associated with the core services of the division. Tasks could include involvement with the division's newsletter, blog, website, listserv, professional education offerings, hospitality planning, and special projects.

According to the policy, the division administrator may invite division members to join the Leadership Council throughout the year, or can work with the division's nominating committee to issue a call for council members. Council members stay in regular contact throughout the year, forming

Figure 1: Membership in ATA Divisions as of May 2011



a dedicated forum to talk about such issues as division projects and coordinating conference schedules. To ensure continuity and a suitable talent pool, this team will ideally represent a mix of experienced long-term division members and talented newcomers. A new Leadership Council will be formed every year, but there are no term limits for council members aside from those applied to the division administrator and assistant administrator. In addition, broad participation will be encouraged by allowing all members of a division to serve on the Leadership Council, regardless of their voting status.

To ensure continuity and previous experience with division leadership, candidates for the office of division administrator and assistant administrator will ideally have been involved previously with the work of the division's Leadership Council.

Most divisions have already begun the process of forming Leadership Councils and will continue this effort in the coming months. More information will be shared at the annual meetings of the divisions at the Annual Conference in Boston.

Nominating Committees

Nominating committees, which are charged with identifying potential candidates for the position of division administrator and assistant administrator, play an important role. While divisions used to assemble their nominating committees every spring, the new policy calls for nominating committees to be established one year in advance of division elections. A call for nominating committee members will go out in advance of the Annual Conference so that committee members—who must be voting members of ATA and may not be current members of a division's Leadership Council—

ATA's 16 divisions have grown into valuable networks that provide a wide range of benefits.

can be introduced to the membership at the annual meeting of the division. The division administrator may also ask the nominating committee to issue a call for Leadership Council volunteers after the Annual Conference.

During the summer, the nominating committee will preferably submit the name of one candidate for the position of division administrator and one candidate for the position of assistant administrator for publication to the division membership in August, along with letters of acceptance by these candidates. If division members have no objection to the slate by the August deadline, the candidates will be elected by acclamation.¹ However, if a Leadership Council or nominating committee deems it impossible or undesirable to present a single candidate for administrator and/or assistant administrator, or if there are objections to the slate presented by the nominating committee by the August deadline, a contested election will be held electronically in advance of the Annual Conference.

Division Administrator and Assistant Administrator

The division administrator is the principal representative of the division and serves as the communication liaison among the division, ATA's Board of Directors, and ATA Headquarters. The administrator may delegate specific duties to members of the division's Leadership Council and is also expected to oversee its activities. As before, only

voting members of the Association (meaning those who are certified or have passed Active Membership Review) may serve as division administrator or assistant administrator. As in the past, the term in office is two years. The administrator and assistant administrator may serve no more than two consecutive terms. In the interest of smaller divisions with a limited pool of volunteers, the policy does not limit the number of times someone can serve. For example, an administrator or assistant administrator may serve two terms and then serve two more consecutive terms after being out of office. Figure 2 on page 13 provides the timeline for division elections.

A Comprehensive Policy

In summary, the new Governing Policy for Divisions represents an update of division structures that responds to technological advances, reflects the recent growth of divisions, and brings together the most successful practices of ATA's Divisions.

Note

1. According to Robert's Rules of Order, election "by acclamation" refers to an election by unanimous consent; this means a candidate can be elected by acclamation only if there are no objections to the slate and if there are no other candidates for the position.

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Figure 2: Timeline for Division Elections

<p>October/November</p>	<p>Division nominating committee appointed at the annual meeting of the division.</p> <p><i>Call for nominating committee members goes out before the conference; nominating committee members must be voting members of ATA.</i></p>	<p>12 months before the division election</p>
<p>April-May</p>	<p>Nominating committee evaluates members of the Leadership Council or other members of the division as candidates for administrator and assistant administrator.</p> <p><i>Preference is given to candidates with previous involvement in the activities of the Leadership Council.</i></p>	<p>Leadership Council established for several months</p>
<p>Early June</p>	<p>Nominating committee submits report to ATA chapter and division relations manager along with a written acceptance letter from each candidate.</p>	<p>16 weeks before annual meeting of the division</p>
<p>Mid-June</p>	<p>ATA Headquarters publishes slate of candidates along with a written candidate statement from each candidate, sending a broadcast e-mail to division membership.</p>	<p>14 weeks before annual meeting of the division</p>
<p>Early August</p>	<p>Deadline for receiving objections to the slate <u>or</u> nominations to add candidates to the slate; each nomination must include a written acceptance letter from the candidate to be added.</p> <p><i>Multiple candidates for office?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">NO</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">YES</div> </div>	<p>45 days after publication of slate</p>
<p>Mid-September</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Ballots for contested elections sent electronically to membership by ATA Headquarters.</p> </div>	<p>45 days before annual meeting of the division</p>
<p>End of September</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Deadline for receipt of ballots by Inspector of Elections in care of ATA Headquarters; electronic process.</p> </div>	<p>30 days before annual meeting of the division</p>
<p>October/November</p>	<p>At the annual meeting of the division: new division administrator and assistant administrator approved by acclamation <u>or</u> election results announced.</p>	