Government Relations Committee Annual Report 2011-2012

The Government Relations Committee Officers in 2011-2012 were Catherine Dunn, Chair, and Melanie Knapp (nee Oberlin), Vice-Chair.

The early months of the year were influenced by significant changes in the Government Relations Office (GRO). During this transition time, the GRC continued to meet in monthly meetings as a committee, including our Board Liaison (AALL President Darcy Kirk) and the GRO staff, in order to ensure that AALL policy was steady, consistent, and progressing during the GRO office’s transition.

The Committee began a new long-term project of drafting one-page, substantive issue briefs on a wide variety of topics. These are typically drafted at the request of the GRO, based on pressing policy issues that arise. To date, over twenty of these one-pagers have been drafted. They are available on the GRO website, and they can be used by AALL members or others to understand AALL policy positions and/or advocate for those positions. One-pagers can also be transmitted to or left with policy-makers, who then have a clear and convenient guide to AALL’s position.

This year, AALL was instrumental in working toward the Uniform Law Commission’s adoption of the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act (UELMA). UELMA, when enacted by a state, mandates permanent public access to official state legal documents published online. Adoption of UELMA in the fifty states will require widespread member advocacy at the state-level. In support of state-level advocacy, Chair Catherine Dunn participated in an AALL webinar, “Making Your Voice Heard: Your Role in State Advocacy,” and wrote an article for *Spectrum* educating members about effective advocacy. The GRC and the GRO conducted a successful pre-conference advocacy workshop at the Annual Meeting in Boston. The workshop featured two break-out sessions, one on UELMA and the other on the future of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP).

The GRC supported the idea of a new AALL FDLP Task Force, which was appointed by President Darcy Kirk in April 2012. As mentioned, the Boston pre-conference advocacy workshop was devoted in part to the future of the FDLP. During the year, Catherine Dunn attended the Fall Depository Library Council meeting. Susan Lyons, GRC Member, is a member of Council. In May, Emily Feltren and GRC Vice Chair Melanie Knapp (nee Oberlin) attended a meet-and-greet with Acting Public Printer Davita Vance-Cooks, which was devoted in significant part to conversations about the FDLP. AALL Executive Director Kate Hagan participated by phone.

The GRC continued to play an important role in AALL’s advocacy and outreach through its regular practice of monitoring policy issues, keeping AALL’s membership abreast of important issues as liaisons to the chapters and special interest sections, sponsoring three programs at the Annual Meeting in Boston, and presenting both the Public Access to Government Information (PAGI) Award and the Robert L. Oakley Advocacy Award. Michele Timmons received the PAGI Award and Barbara Bintliff received the Oakley Award for the critical roles they played in protecting and promoting greater public access to government information as the Chair and the Reporter of the drafting committee for UELMA.

Submitted by Melanie Knapp, Chair, 2012-2013
August 6, 2012