

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Dear CRL Global Collections Stakeholders -

Greetings from CRL and from Chicago!

I have returned from my trip to Seattle where I had the opportunity to meet many of you in person while attending the SEAM and SAMP meetings (and in other less formal settings). As always, the more of you I meet and get to know, the more excited I am about the future of CRL.

I met with Zoë McLaughlin, in her role as Chair of SEAM. I also met with Brian Vivier from the CRL International Collections and Content Group to brainstorm possible opportunities to connect members and work of the [International and Area Studies Collections In the 21st Century](#) with the ICC Group. Finally, I was able to connect with Brian Cwiek from the U.S. Department of Education to discuss the [proposed changes](#) to the DOE language recently posted to the Federal Register related to Area Studies. These sorts of connections will be valuable for me and CRL as I settle into my role.

One theme that continues to dominate conversations with AMP/GRN members regardless of group size or composition is the 2022 CRL audit and budget reconciliation of the AMP/GRN financials. The motivation for the audit, the process, and its results are not widely understood, so here is a quick review, as well as the plan for moving forward.

In 2021, CRL brought in an outside financial firm to evaluate, modernize, and improve CRL's financial operations across the board (e.g. CFO, Controller, and line accounting capabilities). As part of this work, the outside team identified discrepancies between the project reports that the AMP/GRNs had been using and the verified records in CRL's general ledger. This can happen from time-to-time in large organizations, particularly in instances where there are varying and overlapping systems for tracking financial information (e.g. personal excel sheets, departmental summaries, and other "shadow systems"). Over time, these multiple systems can fall out of synchrony, with small errors compounding over time. There was nothing inappropriate, nefarious, or even particularly unusual here. This was simply a flawed process that needed correction.

The good news is that we have identified and corrected the systemic issues. You will remember that the AMP/GRNs now receive quarterly financial reports, with the most recent set of reports having gone out in February. These reports are far more detailed than what CRL shared previously, right down to fund codes, invoice numbers, and project-level expenditures. This standard reporting schedule will allow the CRL team to provide substantive and consistent reports to all groups.

Above and beyond this, it has been CRL's intention from the outset to honor the largest balance reflected on any AMP/GRN budget before the audit took place, since in most

instances the audit resulted in groups having less money than they had expected (though at least one group had more money after the audit). After all, we value and support the work of the AMPs and GRNs. CRL has set aside funds to accommodate one-time upward adjustments to the financials for AMP/GRNs. In future discussion with AMP/GRNs, we will work not only from the current, verified financial reports, but also from the historical number that we wish to address. In terms of sequencing, we still need to clarify the administrative relationship between the AMP/GRNs with CRL, so we know when, where, and how to allocate any one-time adjustments. Rest assured, our intention has been and continues to be to make each AMP/GRN “whole” while simultaneously addressing the systemic and administrative issues that led to confusion in the first place regarding the AMP/GRN financials.

Let me take a moment to say that I am so grateful for the warmth, professionalism, and dedication to the work that I see from our members and partners, in person and online. Thank you all for your consideration, information, and support over my first twelve weeks at CRL!

- Kevin