

A ROAD TO BE BUILT EXPECTATIONS OF THE LASALLIAN RESEARCH AND RESOURCES SERVICE FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

It is the conference done by the Responsible of Lasallian Research and Resources Services of the Institute of Brothers of Christian Schools at the Meeting of Rectors of Lasallian Universities in Mexico and of Presidents of Lasallian Colleges and Universities in the United States of America, Conference Center, Universidad La Salle, Tetela, Cuernavaca, Morelos, on March 23–27, 2014. This conference must be bordered with the first article of our Digital Journal of Lasallian Research, in November, 2010, as the point of arrival of the first period of this publication.

Introduction

I appreciate this opportunity to share some ideas about Lasallian research at this meeting of Rectors and Presidents of Lasallian Universities in Mexico and in the United States of America.

I would like to describe the context for this topic as of the end of a period of five years of work, especially in the midst of the current transition marking the end of a period of Institute governance, in view of the upcoming 45th General Chapter and its election of a new Superior General and his Council. The new Superior and Council, attentive to the Chapter's decisions, will quickly make decisions needed to renew and to strengthen each Secretariat and Service of the Generalate.

My purpose here is to begin with what has been achieved thus far and then to describe possible scenarios that might arise in the next period, 2014 to 2021.

Results during the recent period

The transition from the previous office of *Lasallian Studies* to the *Lasallian Research and Resources Service* has meant a change in perspective about the historical and the spiritual heritage of the Institute, about the importance of the multidisciplinary context of current scientific research, and about the need to incorporate communications technology in the process of conservation, production, and dissemination of Lasallian thinking.

The Service received positive feedback from its research projects on the educational reality of the twenty-first century, specifically illuminated by the Lasallian tradition. The focus on Lasallian pedagogy and association is evident in our publications, which cover a broad spectrum of topics on education, teaching, and ministry.

We have also made an initial effort to preserve and to disseminate the historical and the spiritual heritage of the Institute. I will mention four specific strategies: digitizing the archival holdings of the Generalate, cataloging the Lasallian Library and renovating the La Salle Museum in Rome, and publishing biennially the *Digital Journal of Lasallian Research*. In all these projects, the Service has been in contact with universities and institutions that have offered support and guidance. 174

We have also learned that Lasallian research needs to be undertaken in a spirit of partnership, that is, by understanding the need to strengthen the network of Lasallian researchers worldwide, to foster projects from a multidisciplinary and a multicultural perspective that represents the diversity of today's Lasallian world, and, especially, to work with universities and research institutes with their skilled faculty and administration for achieving and promoting knowledge, supported by *ad hoc* academic groups of scholars.

During the past five years, the Lasallian Research and Resources Service has enjoyed a proactive relationship, both professional and fraternal, with the IALU network of universities with which we have carried out projects that have an impact on the entire Institute.

The challenges for a new period of activity by our Service are ambitious ones:

1. To form potential Lasallian researchers within and outside the borders of our Institute.
2. To assure the digitization of the Lasallian archives in order to offer to researchers and students in the worldwide Lasallian network the primary documentation required to support significant research projects.
3. To build a scientific knowledge base that is accessible by all members of the worldwide Lasallian family and by research centers active in the field of education.

Possible future scenarios

Brother Superior General, in his report to the 45th General Chapter, includes in the section on the Government of the Institute:

Lasallian Research & Resources Service should also continue but with more systematic contacts and collaboration with Lasallian Universities (Government of the Institute, 3.3, Secretariats and Services, p. 26).

To try to understand the different scenarios that can translate these “more systematic contacts and collaboration” between our Service and the IALU network, I can imagine various possible strategies in three areas: structures, functions, and tasks.

a. Structures

The Service as such must continue its mission within the Generalate as the primary repository of the valuable archives, library, and museum of the Institute. Furthermore, the presence of the staff who are involved in the Service can reinforce formation experiences, such as the CIL and the IALU university leadership program (coordinated by Saint Mary's University of Minnesota) among others.

Nevertheless, the coordinator of Lasallian Research—whoever it is—will be called upon to promote and to maintain a global Lasallian network of researchers.

Questions

Is it possible that the IALU network can promote an administrative structure for Lasallian research within the global network in which the Lasallian Research and Resources Service would have a formal role and even be considered as a “research center” for the entire network?

Is it possible that the Lasallian Research and Resources Service can physically count on a campus office at one of the Lasallian universities, for the purpose of interacting more directly with an academic team within the IALU structure to help to consolidate projects?

b. Functions

We believe that the Lasallian Research and Resources Services ought to focus on three areas of operation: the conservation of the Lasallian heritage (*Memoria lasalliana*), the formation of Lasallian researchers, and the promotion of new research related to the current needs of education and of pedagogy and based on the Lasallian charism.

Today, the Generalate in Rome is a community of services, not of students; therefore, the General Archive of the Institute, the Lasallian Library, and the La Salle Museum of Rome could be considered as Lasallian Resources for the IALU network, if we were able to connect them in an integrated system of Lasallian archives, libraries, and museums able to generate common projects of conservation, advocacy, and research.

The Lasallian formation of Brothers and lay colleagues has undergone considerable development in the last thirty years. Today each Region of the Institute has centers capable of providing consistent formation for present and future Lasallians. Although the Institute held a session of SIEL for the formation of Lasallian researchers, we are concerned about not having available a new generation of Lasallians to conduct and to publish such research on a regular basis.

The Lasallian Research and Resources Service will be called upon to work systematically with the other Secretariats of the Institute in line with the renewal of Lasallian pedagogy in the twenty-first century as requested by the second International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission (MEL) in May 2013 (*Challenges and Final Recommendations*, Education, Challenge 1, p. 26). The Lasallian universities ought to be present in this task, for they have the necessary academic platform to support quality reflection.

Questions

Is it possible that the IALU network can create in the near future an integrated, worldwide system of Lasallian archives, libraries, and museums with the capacity to generate information and to make it available for global Lasallian research?

Is it possible that the IALU universities, in accord with appropriate academic standards, can generate research processes of Lasallian investigation worthy of academic recognition, that is, accredited through on-line processes and presence for the entire worldwide Lasallian network?

Is it possible that scholars from the various Lasallian universities can participate in global research projects and produce publications that are indexed over the Lasallian network (which involves the use of the three official languages of the Institute, English, French, and Spanish)?

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c. Tasks

The Lasallian Research and Resources Service continues to generate publications that reflect Lasallian thinking: *Digital Journal of Lasallian Research* No. 8 (May 2014), on the research articles of SIEL; *Lasallian Studies* No. 18 (April 2014), *The Fragile Hope of a Witness; the Itinerary of Brother Michel Sauvage (1923–2001)*; *Cahiers lasalliens* No. 67 (October 2014), *The Conduct of the Christian Schools; Diachronic Study; Evolution of the Text Between 1706 and 1916*.

The celebration of the 300th anniversary of the death of John Baptist de La Salle (1719–2019) has been chosen by the Brothers of France, especially by the Commission on Lasallian Research (CORELA), as a challenge to complete and to offer to the entire Institute the *Critical Biography of John Baptist de La Salle*. This commission is currently working with the University of Lyon.

We at the Lasallian Research and Resources Service have also planned to produce a *Lasallian collection* that assumes the task of producing contemporary Lasallian thinking through a dialogue with the educational reality of the twenty-first century.

We think that this *Lasallian collection* can offer the following books on these key aspects:

2015: Interreligious and intercultural dialogue in the Lasallian school

2016: Lasallian teaching methods for education in the twenty-first century

2017: Spirituality of the twenty-first century Lasallian educator

2018: Citizenship and human rights in the twenty-first century Lasallian school

2019: Lasallian educational memories and itineraries

Questions

Can we, Lasallians of the twenty-first century, generate a Lasallian thinking based on tradition and open to dialogue with current educational realities?

Is it possible to work on this potential collection with the support of research teams from the universities in all the Regions of the Institute, in coordination with the Lasallian Research and Resources Service?

Is it possible to publish this planned collection with the support of Lasallian university presses, thereby assuring the translating, editing, and publishing in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish?

Is it possible that the academic products in this collection can be accredited by Lasallian universities as a stimulus for the participants?

Conclusion

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We are convinced that these proposed scenarios for the work are possible if we have the leadership, the institutional initiative, and the clear conviction that we have a responsibility to ensure the future of the Institute, the need for which is very great in the Church and in the society.

I am convinced that Lasallian Higher Education will have a special role in the twenty-first century because of its ability to produce knowledge and to achieve a renewing presence in society .

I hope that we can work together “to respond with ardent zeal” to the current challenges, “in order to procure the glory of God” (*Rule*, article 149).

Cuernavaca, March 25, 2014