

ZOO REGISTRARS ASSOCIATION FIVE -YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2002-2007



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Zoo Registrars Association (ZRA) is dedicated to promoting the registrar's role within the zoological industry and to supporting the professional growth of its members by increasing their understanding of and ability to perform a registrar's functions, i.e. monitoring relevant legislation and regulations, managing animal transactions, managing data, and providing advice during policy formulation. In the next five years, ZRA will raise its profile in the zoological industry, explore the registrar's role in creating collection policies, and continue to assist members in animal transactions, data management, and monitoring of legislation and regulations.

ZRA will accomplish our goals by increasing membership and expanding membership involvement, both within the organization and in the zoological community as a whole. In response to the increasing numbers and types of conservation programs, and changing regulatory interpretations, ZRA will develop materials to help ZRA members and other colleagues understand the complexities of transactions, regulations, and data management.

ZRA will develop and distribute descriptive materials and presentations to better market the organization to our peers, as well as to the zoological and conservation communities. Our marketing plan will be accomplished by forming a committee and identifying liaisons to focus on developing materials and relationships.

II. ASSOCIATION OVERVIEW

ZRA is a non-profit, international organization. Members have expertise in legislative and permitting issues, managing transactions and data, and implementing policies by developing procedures related to live and preserved animal collections. The group began in 1984 and has grown to a membership of over 110. ZRA's philosophy is best summed up in its mission, vision, and values statements.

MISSION

To provide support and assistance to its members, its members' institutions and related professional organizations by:

- Developing and maintaining professional standards for records keeping, data management, transactions and collection policies
- Improving data collection systems and data accuracy
- Monitoring relevant legislation, and
- Striving to increase inter-zoo communication and cooperation

VISION

ZRA will inspire registrars to meet and fulfill their potential.

ZRA will promote the use of standards in animal transactions and data management in zoos and aquariums.

ZRA will play an active role in industry discussions of animal transport, legislation and regulatory issues.

ZRA will foster cooperative relationships with the global conservation community.

VALUES

- **INTEGRITY** We expect and demand the highest standards of honesty and integrity in our interactions with each other, our management of animal transactions, and our management of data.
- **ACCURACY** We strive for accuracy in all our endeavors.
- **RESPECT** We treat both people and animals with the utmost respect.

GOALS

To support our mission and vision over the next five years ZRA will:

Enhance membership by recruiting new members and involving them in the ZRA management structure.

OBJECTIVES:

- *Increase membership by 20% in five years with a special focus on aquariums and international colleagues.*
- *Increase member involvement in ZRA committees by 20%.*

Support members and related organizations by providing resource materials, continuing education and training in professional standards and relevant issues.

OBJECTIVES:

- *Update the job description for a zoo/aquarium registrar.*
- *Expand records training programs to include other global regions.*
- *Create a tiered curriculum to address the needs of registrars and institutions at various levels of records management.*
- *Create an education task force to develop materials to help registrars train staff on information gathering procedures and the importance of data accuracy.*
- *Develop a bibliography of relevant titles and post on the ZRA website.*
- *Provide registrar resource materials.*
- *Continue support for the American Zoo and Aquarium (AZA) Board of Regents Institutional Records Keeping (IRK) course.*
- *Continue to publish and enhance the bi-annual newsletter to offer more effective communication.*
- *Continue to use the ZRA list serve to inform members and discuss pertinent issues.*
- *Expand our focus on policy issues.*
- *Create a task force to work with smaller zoological institutions/facilities, which may not have a registrar, to provide resource materials and other assistance as requested.*
- *Develop resource materials for new members*
- *Develop mentoring programs for new members.*
- *Expand the web-site to include more information.*

Increase communication with related organizations through written materials, presentations, papers, and professional interactions.

OBJECTIVES:

- *Present a poster session on ZRA at the 2002 AZA national conference.*
- *Develop a ready-to-use presentation on ZRA.*
- *Build relationships with AZA, ISIS, United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), and other organizations by creating liaisons.*
- *Continue presenting records workshops at conferences.*
- *Expand current cooperation with AZA Government Affairs with a focus on legislation, regulations, and animal transport issues.*

Provide funding for projects that support ZRA's mission.

OBJECTIVE:

- *Search out, evaluate and support appropriate projects.*

III. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

ZRA is an international organization. Members must deal with the regulations pertaining to endangered species, welfare of animals, and the protection of human and non human animal health. Accurate information is crucial to every aspect of the registrar's job. The majority of zoological institutions use software provided by ISIS (International Species Information System) as their data management tool. For North American ZRA members, the AZA is a primary force in setting and administering guidelines for animal transactions. These guidelines include accreditation standards, acquisition and disposition policy recommendations, code of ethics, and/or participation in AZA conservation and science programs. Regardless of geographic area, each member's institution has its own set of policies and procedures. Navigating through the levels of regulations, guidelines, and standards can be difficult, and ZRA provides its members with the information and support to meet the challenge.

MARKET TRENDS

The zoo industry is changing rapidly and issues registrars deal with are increasing in number and scope. Modifications in legislation, regulations and enforcement measures are creating a greater need for zoos and aquariums to continually monitor wildlife laws. Expanding captive conservation programs requires standards for transactions and an increased focus on accurate data and the need for data managers. Collaborative field conservation programs are increasing in number, often involving complex animal transactions, transportation, arrangements for biomaterials, and permitting. Heightened sensitivity toward animal welfare and conservation issues is raising ethics and policy questions. These are trends that ZRA is prepared to address.

IV. ZRA DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGY

ZRA's strengths are in its member expertise and support, networking and training opportunities. Its annual conference and electronic list serve provide continuing education in permitting issues, legislation and regulations, animal transactions and data management. Continuing education is in the form of mentoring, workshops, formal courses, or discussions on the list serve. Through these venues, ZRA increases the professionalism of the zoo/aquarium registrar position.

ZRA is a dynamic organization whose membership has grown from 13 individuals in 1984 to over 110 individuals and supporting institutions in 2001. The revenue generated by this growth, combined with a high member retention rate has allowed the organization to support mission-related projects.

Growth Strategy

During the first fifteen years of its existence, ZRA concentrated on consolidating its membership base by providing practical information and support to zoo/aquarium registrars on the topics that figure prominently in most of their job descriptions (animal legislation and regulation, data management and records keeping, and animal transactions). ZRA is now a firmly established association with a solid North American membership base from which it is building and continuing to improve its international collaborations. The zoo industry is emphasizing greater accountability in all its functions, providing an opportunity for expansion of the registrar's role. Registrars' expertise in these key areas will be an essential part of zoo and aquarium management in the next decade. ZRA is well positioned to help its members fulfill their professional potential and to offer the organization's collective expertise as the zoo industry changes in the 21st century.

Modifications in legislation, regulations and enforcement measures are creating a greater need for zoos and aquariums to monitor wildlife laws. ZRA is actively working to increase communication with government regulatory agencies such as the USFWS as well as with the AZA Government Affairs Committee. The 2001 ZRA annual conference focused on legislation and regulations providing a forum for registrars and regulatory personnel to meet and exchange information. Continued reciprocal communication benefits ZRA members by supplying knowledge and an understanding of the way laws and regulations are interpreted and enforced. ZRA's participation remains a source of practical knowledge on the perception of regulations and enforcement by those affected. ZRA will continue its initiative in this area.

Heightened sensitivity toward animal welfare and conservation issues is raising ethics and policy questions. ZRA members have a wealth of personal knowledge of ethics and policy issues from their individual institutions but the ZRA has yet to address these matters on an organizational level. Discussion of these subjects will be of value to ZRA members and input from other zoo and conservation professionals will improve the

association's grasp of the issues. These are certainly topics for ZRA to focus on in the next five years, possibly as a theme for an upcoming annual conference.

Expanding captive conservation programs require standards for transactions and an increased focus on accurate data. ZRA continues with various efforts to increase awareness of the need for data standards and to offer assistance in the development of such standards as a means to recording more accurate data. ZRA members were involved in the creation of the AZA course "Institutional Records Keeping" and continue to teach the course as part of the curriculum of the AZA Professional Training Program. ZRA members offer a modified version of the course as requested with increasing frequency by national and international professional organizations. Participation in captive conservation programs is one way smaller zoos begin to interact with the larger zoo community and discover that records keeping has implications beyond the local institution. Records keeping courses are often the first glimpse records keepers have of the bigger role that can be played by a zoo/aquarium registrar. ZRA will continue to respond to requests for members' expertise in data standards and records keeping methods and will build on the success of current courses.

Collaborative field conservation programs are increasing in number, often involving complex logistics, agreements, and permits for animals and biomaterials. While ZRA does not currently participate in any field conservation programs, individual members provide advice and logistical support to collaborators. ZRA will continue to encourage members to participate in conservation programs at every level and will assist members' participation by keeping them abreast of current issues.

Animal transport has always been cumbersome and transportation in the modern age was becoming increasingly difficult, even before the terrorist events against the United States on September 11, 2001. Registrars often have the responsibility for arranging logistics of animal (and, more recently, biomaterial) transport. Consequently, many registrars assumed the task of working with airline representatives to comply with the restrictions imposed by the FAA as a result of September 11. The cumulative experience of its members with regard to animal transport issues puts ZRA in an excellent position to offer advice, support and leadership on these concerns. ZRA will continue to liaise with the AZA and other organizations to work through animal transport matters.

Competitive Advantage

ZRA has the advantage of being a well-organized, established association with experienced leaders and a solid membership base. The organization's first 15 years were focused on developing a support structure and training opportunities for our members. ZRA is in the process of building a network that reaches colleagues worldwide. ZRA is now in a position to market ZRA as a source of educated, informed professionals, knowledgeable about permitting issues and animal regulations, collections policies, transactions, and records and data management.

V. ACTION PLAN

To achieve the goals of our five-year plan it will be necessary to take several steps within the first two years. These steps include:

- Continue the committees and programs already established.
- Continue to provide advice and support to the AZA and other organizations as more effective and efficient animal transport options are discussed.
- Continue reciprocal communication with USFWS and the AZA with regard to legislation and regulatory issues.
- Create a task force to focus on assistance for smaller zoological institutions/facilities, which may not have a registrar.
- Recruit members to serve on committees and/or work on specific projects.
- Establish a committee to focus on what resource materials we need to develop to complete our five-year goals. This committee will interface with the training, international, conservation, membership, and other related committees.
- Identify liaisons who can develop ZRA's relationships with related organizations.
- Identify a sub-committee under the membership committee, which will focus on soliciting new members and improving member benefits.
- Identify a task force to focus on ethics and policies, and investigate a conference theme.
- The current chair will assign ZRA members to review and assess the plan every two years starting from the date of implementation.

VI. FINANCIAL REVIEW

The ZRA depends on dues to generate revenue. With approximately 100 members dues generate approximately \$2,500.00 per year. Yearly operating expenses include printing and mailing materials for membership packets, an annual web-site fee, and thank-you gifts for the annual conference.