

LLAMA President's Message



The LLAMA Competencies Committee recently completed a survey of members to identify core competencies of leaders and managers. Included among the top responses was managing change. Two books I've read recently touch on this topic. In this, my last president's column, I'd like to reflect on how we might manage the changes that lie ahead for LLAMA.

I am very excited that William Ury will be our speaker for the LLAMA President's Program at the ALA 2016 Annual Conference. Ury is co-author of the classic negotiation textbook, *Getting to Yes*. This is a book I used as an undergraduate and which has influenced my approach to conflict even since. Ury's latest book, *Getting to Yes with Yourself and Other Worthy Opponents* serves, according to the author, as a prequel to the earlier text. Ury argues that, in challenging situations, we often "get in our own way." In *Getting to Yes with Ourselves*, Ury provides six steps for better understanding ourselves, recontextualizing a conflict, and reigning in our emotions to seek "win-win-win" solutions – a win for our own interests, for the other party, and for the larger society. Making major changes in how LLAMA is organized and the work we do will require some negotiation. I am hopeful that we can all reflect on what we look for in our relationship with LLAMA, and can look for those solutions that meet our most pressing needs, the most pressing needs of other LLAMA members (and future LLAMA members), all in the interest of the "win" of creating a terrific, modern professional association.

I've also been reading *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*, by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey. They, too, seem to be saying that we "get in our own way." The things we most want to accomplish may be thwarted by actions that we ourselves take. We make these seemingly counter-productive moves for a very rational reason – they serve as an "immunity to change," protecting us from our fears. Kegan and Lahey outline a process for understanding our own immunity systems so we can test our underlying assumptions and face our suppressed fears. According to the authors, "when we overcome an immunity to change, we stop making what we have come to see is actually a bad bargain: our immune system has been giving us relief from anxiety while creating a false belief that many things are impossible for us to do – things that in fact are completely possible for us to do!" Changing a complex organization like LLAMA can

seem impossible. We may fear losing our professional home, or disrupting a history of providing valuable programs, or offending those who have built an organization that has done so much good. My hope is that we can expose and challenge these fears, and open ourselves to the possibilities of a truly revitalized and forward-looking organization.

At the ALA 2016 Annual Conference, the Reorganization Task Force will discuss, refine, and, I am hopeful, present to the LLAMA Board a draft document that outlines the structure and process for realizing a “new” organization. Among the goals we have for the LLAMA of the future are a more coherent program of leadership development, better and more meaningful use of volunteers’ time, and more effective use of our talented staff. I am confident that together we can create a fantastic, new LLAMA.

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LLAMA President, 2015-2016

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