

LLAMA President's Message

Lynn Hoffman



If you've been following the new division project LLAMA has been working on with the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) and the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA), you may already know that the project has been put on hold. (For more information about the decision to pause, check out connect.ala.org/all.)

We've learned a tremendous amount from this process so far. First, organizational cultures are hard. This is something everyone involved with the project knew intellectually but have now experienced more viscerally. Culture doesn't just come to be overnight, and it doesn't change quickly, either. When you're trying to get the cultures of more than one organization to blend together, you're bound to run into conflict. That's true even if everyone involved believes strongly in the mission and vision of what you're doing, and is excited about the new organization, as I believe all of us have felt about the new division project. I think because we had a lot of agreement among the three divisions, the culture differences caught us somewhat by surprise.

Second, there's nothing wrong with taking a step back from an obstacle to reevaluate and possibly decide to go in a different direction. People who work in libraries often fall victim to the **sunk cost fallacy**, the idea that when you walk away from a project in which you've invested a lot of resources, the loss of the resources you've already invested is somehow worse than continuing further down an unsuccessful path. (Libraries are also ripe environments for sunk cost's cousin, **escalation of commitment**, where beyond simply continuing forward in the face of potential problems, you double down and pour even *more* resources into the project.) My theory is that library workers are prone to this fallacy because the resources we would continue to use have to do with our time, and that often feels less expensive to us than money. Either way, I'm glad that we have been able to avoid this trap so far by taking time to reconsider.

So, what happens now?

We are committed to seeing how we can make the most of the opportunities this process has presented and position LLAMA for future growth. We still have a lot to gain from joining with our colleagues, especially in building capacity for new initiatives and more rich member engagement, and discussions about how a new division might move forward will continue. We're also closely watching the work of ALA's Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness. This group made several presentations at ALA Midwinter in Seattle that suggest some kind of reorganization will be happening within ALA over the next several years, and we want to make sure LLAMA is ready to step into whatever role or space that new structure provides.

After committing a lot of our leadership and board resources to the new division project, we plan to refocus our attention on LLAMA with an eye toward providing the best possible value for our members. We're looking at three specific areas:

- We will amplify our existing strengths, particularly our strong, responsive continuing education offerings, and the high degree of effectiveness in our Communities of Practice.
- We will look for new development opportunities and initiatives that have member impact without adding to the support burden of our LLAMA office staff. Ideas include convening a project team to create a safety and security toolkit for libraries of all types, and creating new discussion groups that will allow us to explore new virtual models for this kind of member interaction while filling gaps in our existing discussion group complement (e.g. peer support for new directors/deans, library staff in "lone" settings where they are both line staff and management, etc.).
- We will focus on communication in order to strengthen the connections among Communities of Practice and LLAMA at large, and to ensure members get information about LLAMA in the right places at the right times.

LLAMA is in a strong position, and the LLAMA Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that no matter what happens with the new division project, or ALA's organizational effectiveness efforts, or our own internal activities, we're ready to take intentional steps forward. It continues to be an exciting time to be a part of LLAMA. Look for more information to come about these initiatives and how you may be able to get involved.

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