



President's Column

Catherine Murray-Rust

I recently had the pleasure of being a member of a planning group for an academic library summit in Colorado. The evening before the conference, our group got together to prepare the packets and check the arrangements, and afterward we went out to dinner.

As the dinner progressed, the conversation turned from the plans for the next day to books and reading, almost guilty pleasures for those of us who spend most of our waking hours in the warm glow of electronic devices.

Someone in the group asked each of us to describe our favorite book in the past six months. I was amazed by the variety of our choices in style and content, fiction and nonfiction. One librarian enthused about a science-fiction series, while another described adventure tales. Others named books of inspiration and advice. My choice as one of the few novel readers in the group was Shirley Hazzard's lyrical post-World War II story of love and loss, *The Great Fire*.

I think back on that evening as an experience much like the conference the next day—a coming together of librarians from a wide variety of institutions and specialties, united by our commitment to libraries and through them our commitment to reading and the life of the mind. Despite the gloomy forecast about support for higher education in Colorado—or maybe because of it—we renewed our dedication to advocacy and collaboration. Working with the planning group and participating in the summit was one of the best LAMA experiences I have had over the years.

Features of LAMA that I treasure and that have kept me active in the division are the variety of people who are LAMA members and their critical roles in many kinds of institutions. LAMA is one of the few places in the American Library Association where public, academic, and the occasional special librarian come together to learn and grow as leaders of our profession. The wealth of experience and perspectives and the belief that collaboration is valuable are LAMA's strengths that I hope to build upon during my presidential year.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, in her recent book *Confidence: How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and*

End, uses the stories of sports teams, companies, and the South African government of Nelson Mandela to illustrate the qualities that create and sustain confidence. She convincingly argues that: "Leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else. Leaders are responsible both for the big structures that serve as the cornerstones of confidence, and for the human touches that shape a positive emotional climate to inspire and motivate people."¹ Or put another way by one of Moss Kanter's examples, Mike Krzyzewski, Duke University's men's basketball coach, "Leadership is plural."²

In LAMA, as in our libraries, leadership is certainly plural. An example of this concept in action is the new LAMA program called Dialogue with Directors. At Annual Conference, public and academic librarians meet informally with anyone who wants to participate to discuss questions about career paths, qualifications, obstacles, and successes. Judging from the dialogues so far, they are very valuable for all who attend. I have learned from the public library directors and the future leaders, including the participants in LAMA's Leaders of the Pack program, and I hope that they have learned something from me. Of course, we deans and directors do not always provide the answers that aspiring managers want to hear. At the most recent dialogue, a young woman asked when some of us were planning to retire and make way for a new generation. I appreciated the frankness of the question even as I thought about the college tuition bill for my daughter waiting at home. After explaining that some of us are not quite ready to go just yet because we still have a lot to contribute, my colleagues and I assured her that we want the very best leaders to take our places in the future. We have not invested a lifetime of work in our libraries to turn them over to just anybody. Making sure that our future library leaders are confident and committed is the purpose of LAMA and its members now and in the future.

LAMA as an organization, however, can only be as strong and effective as our dedication as individuals. Those of us who are involved in advocacy and fund-raising constantly talk about the importance of giving back so that those who come after us will benefit. This also is true in our professional organizations. Giving back is often measured in money terms, but a gift of time is often more

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valuable. For LAMA, this means giving one's time to support leadership development opportunities, programs, and networking. It means being a mentor as well as having a mentor. In the future, I hope that you will be willing to not only join LAMA but also to become active participants in the development of the next generation of library leaders.

References


1. Rosabeth Moss Kanter. *Confidence: How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and End* (New York: Crown Business, 2004), 325.
2. *Ibid.*, 329.

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in tandem with John Lubans's column, which examines coaching through the prism of a case study of the Chamber Sinfonia Orchestra of the Manhattan School of Music. The orchestra functions as a self-managed group of musicians, without the direction of a conductor. Lubans writes of this experiment, "Telling someone they are *empowered* is not the same as guiding them to genuine empowerment. A

self-led team of smart and dedicated people can be more effective than the same group led by a boss. Achieving a self-directed staff takes more than desire—guidance is essential to move from concept to achievement."

I hope that you will take away new ideas from the articles in this issue—some of which are radical, others practical—all of which are thought-provoking.

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