



## President's Column

Catherine Murray-Rust

"Plan or be planned for," warned Don Riggs in an editorial in *College and Research Libraries* in 1997.<sup>1</sup> Libraries, he declared, must plan strategically to create change, not just react to it. Today, because of the precarious position of our libraries

and professional organizations in terms of human and financial support, planning is no longer optional. It is imperative.

Strategic planning is complex in the world of nonprofits. John Bryson believes that the purpose of nonprofits—groups, organizations, and communities—is to create public value. "Creating public value means producing enterprises, policies, programs, projects, services or infrastructure (physical, technological, social and so on) that advance the public interest and the common good at a reasonable cost."<sup>2</sup>

Bryson urges leaders of nonprofit organizations to adopt a strategy change cycle, based on the organization's mission, that is "clearly focused on satisfying key stakeholders in ways that are politically acceptable, technically and administratively workable, and legally and ethically defensible."<sup>3</sup> Making strategic choices that direct a nonprofit's efforts toward a few important issues or themes and aligning people, funding, and technology to the plan are the keys to success.

As in our libraries, our professional organizations, such as LAMA and ALA, will prosper only if they focus their efforts and resources on strategic issues that deliver value to members. Which bring me to LAMA's new strategic plan. Creating a new plan for LAMA began in 2005, parallel to the development of ALA's plan, *ALA Ahead to 2010*. The ALA plan has six goal areas, including advocacy, education, public policy and standards, building the profession, membership, and organizational excellence. ALA's goals focus on advocacy for libraries and librarians as well as improving services for members. More than 20,000 members participated in the ALA planning process by the time the document was distributed at the 2006 Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio.

The LAMA Strategic Planning Task Force was charged with developing a draft plan that focused on a few key issues. The task force conducted an online survey to determine which goals are the most important to the membership. At the 2006 Midwinter Meeting, the LAMA board endorsed the new plan with its four main goals: value to members, education, leadership and management, and organizational excellence. The next step is to refine the goals, set metrics, and align LAMA staff and members, finances, and technology to support the plan.

Alignment of strategic plans with people, funding, and technology is often where the process comes apart. In profit-making and nonprofit organizations, the complaints are common. Leaders moan that strategic planning is not worth the effort and the time it takes; plans developed over months or even years make little impact and are soon forgotten. Employees often have scant influence over the content of the plan and feel little motivation to carry out its goals. Technology managers do not know how their activities fit with plan goals. Actively working to align plan goals with people, finances, and technology ensures that strategy translates into action.

Alignment is especially challenging in volunteer professional associations such as LAMA. Although many sections, committees, and discussion groups reviewed the draft plan, there is a long way to go to integrate plan activities LAMA-wide. Growing LAMA's new Web site in content and effectiveness so that it becomes the main portal for delivering value to members and implementing other plan goals requires a new level of commitment from the division leadership and members. LAMA currently has a separate financial strategies document that needs to be incorporated into implementation of the strategic plan, and, more importantly, the new initiatives fund needs to grow to ensure that funds flow to new programs and projects, such as the mentoring program.

LAMA, however, can only increase its ability to deliver value to members if the members themselves are willing to give their time, expertise, financial support, and enthusiasm to the effort. To deliver new and improved services, the members as well as the leadership must find new and creative ways to increase LAMA's public value.

One new initiative that will generate debate is the transformation of this journal, *LA&M*, into electronic

---

**Catherine Murray-Rust** (catherine.murray-rust@colostate.edu) is Dean of the Colorado State University Library.

**continued on page 112**

form. Continuing to support its print publication is decreasing LAMA's financial ability to support new initiatives to strengthen services and attract new members. To continue to provide timely, practical advice to members and to meet the standard of delivering value at a reasonable cost, plans are underway to convert *LA&M* to an electronic journal. The process will start with making past issues available online and progress to creating a new form of *LA&M* that combines the best of print with the flexibility of electronic delivery. As one of the LAMA members discussing this transition noted, we cannot ask the users of our libraries to accept e-journals if we are unwilling to transform our professional literature as well.

As you read this issue of *LA&M*, enjoy the practical advice it contains about many activities that help translate strategy into action—running meetings, interviewing and hiring people, and planning a library lecture. Also consider

how an online form of *LA&M* could provide articles and theme issues, an online archive to use at the point of need, and, better still, new ways of delivering content that increase networking and allow for the exchange of ideas between the readership and the authors. I personally cannot wait.

## References

1. Donald E. Riggs, "Plan or Be Planned for: The Growing Significance of Strategic Planning," *College and Research Libraries* 58, no. 5 (1997): 400.
2. John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 8.
3. *Ibid.*, 63.

On the whole, the public's usage of the library helps to define the needs that should be met with the library expansion. Every library I have worked with has had different usage patterns. . . . However, usage patterns can only tell part of the story. Sometimes there are areas in a library that are underused because they are badly laid out or inaccessible. A library expansion gives the library administrator a chance to adjust the relationships within the library to best serve the needs of the library population.

Lastly, this issue features, as part of our ChangeMasters series, a profile of Hannelore Rader. Author Cheryl McCain, library instruction coordinator at the University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, has provided a wonderful overview of Rader's career, in particular Rader's ability

to look at a situation and then find a way to make things happened—advice that is applicable to all of us, in whatever stage of our career. McCain asks:

What about the willingness of leaders to take risks? To this question Rader responds, "You have to have ideas and visions for the future. I think a good leader has to have that and then find ways to make it happen." For Rader, making things happen is partly accomplished by being assertive. "That is where your pushiness and your consistency and your strength come in," she says, "because you have to find ways to get the support and the funding to do all of those things."

These remarks serve well to sum up this issue.