



President's Column

Andrea Lapsley

The Best of Times

Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* begins with:

*It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wis-
dom, it was the age of*

*foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the
epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light,
it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring
of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had
everything before us, we had nothing before us.*

That sentence keeps running through my head as I write this column and think about LAMA today and the next few months of my presidential year.

I certainly see the duality of what lies ahead for LAMA. We have many wonderful programs and projects moving forward that will deliver even greater value to our members, and we have our fiftieth anniversary. Yet in the midst of all these positives, we have lost our executive director. When I first heard that Lorraine Olley was leaving for a wonderful new opportunity, I immediately thought, "Why did this have to happen under my watch, during this celebratory year?" I then realized that she is part of the reason that we are now experiencing the "best of times." I know you join me in wishing Lorraine well in her new position and thank her for the five years that she devoted to LAMA.

The loss of an executive director could have been the "worst of times" for me as I wondered how to keep everything moving forward. Fortunately, though, that lasted only a nanosecond. Fred Reuland, LAMA's marketing and communications person, is stepping up to the plate. The American Library Association (ALA) is also offering help and guidance as we begin the search for a new executive director. Finally, I have had an outpouring of offers from members and the current leadership to help in any way possible during this transition period. I am not a pessimist, so perhaps my feelings are more in line with Bob Dylan's 1964

classic "The Times They Are A-Changin'." That seems to better capture the spirit of what is happening with LAMA.

For LAMA, this really is the best of times. In addition to our fiftieth anniversary celebration, the following is just a brief list of some of the things within LAMA that make my "best of times" list:

- Thanks to the work of previous LAMA leaders and generous donors, our endowment now exceeds \$125,000. Current leaders are working to raise an additional \$50,000 in commemoration of our golden anniversary. Thanks to their efforts, more than \$16,000 has been raised in just two months. I am confident that by the time you read this column they will have reached the goal. My sincere thanks go to everyone who has made an investment in LAMA's future through this campaign. Funds are always needed for new initiatives and projects, and that is how the endowment interest is used. Now for a shameless plug: If you have not shown your support with a gift, it is not too late. You can go to LAMA's homepage (www.ala.org/lama) and find the donation form. Together, we can give LAMA a strong financial base as we move into the next fifty years.
- LAMA is truly blessed to have such an active and committed membership. Our members have always willingly taken on leadership roles within the organization and shared ideas for new programs and projects. I am grateful to have worked with so many talented individuals throughout my nineteen years within LAMA. I have learned from you and shared the lessons learned with others that are growing within LAMA.
- The LAMA membership can also be proud of *LA&M*, our electronic journal. Not only is *LA&M* packed with practical and useful information, LAMA is a leader within ALA by embracing technology and switching to the electronic format. Each issue delivers so much more than could be included in a print publication, while saving LAMA money.
- Communication is faster and easier than ever. With a robust Web page, wikis, electronic discussion lists, and ALA's new Online Communities software, we are instantly in communication with each other. For more information, see Brian Gray's article on LAMA Web resources in this issue of *LA&M*.

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- It is also the best of times for the LAMA sections and committees. Each is busy creating top-notch programs and publications. Attendance at LAMA programs has never been higher. At every conference, I hear people talking about the LAMA programs and their high-quality speakers. Our preconferences and regional institutes offer a variety of topics with talented experts. Two publications are expected before our Annual Conference, and ten more are in the works. New formats allow us to look at a variety of ways of delivering these works—print and digital download, just to name two—allowing a publication to get into the hands of the customer much sooner. A new mentorship committee is being formed to address issues in this critical area to librarianship.
- LAMA awards are flourishing. The John Cotton Dana Award is entering its sixty-first year. The collaboration with the H. W. Wilson Company is one of the longest partnerships within ALA. Some of LAMA's newer partnerships are the prestigious ALA/IIDA Interior Design Awards, which continue to receive hundreds of nominations. Two other noteworthy awards are the Library Building Awards, in conjunction with the American Institute of Architects, and the Yankee Book Peddler library school student writing award.

I know each of you can come up with your own list of best things about LAMA. I've only mentioned a few. So, even though we are in the "best of times," it is also true that "the times, they are a-changin'." As we move forward with the search for a new executive director, there is no limit to what can be accomplished.

It seems as if this presidential year has flown by. As you read this column, my time will quickly be coming to an end. A new change in leadership will take place after Annual Conference with the very talented and capable Bede Mitchell taking over as the fifty-first president. And, by the time you read this, we will have held our elections and the fifty-second president will have been selected. Congratulations to our new leadership that will keep us moving forward in the "best of times."

I want to conclude this column by thanking each of you for your support, energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to making LAMA the best organization possible. I am truly grateful and humbled by your dedication. This is a year I will never forget. LAMA is not about a single person or individual effort, but about all of us working together. That truly has been evident during this past year. Thank you to each of you for making it so.

2007, another birthday present to the members of LAMA. Also, always important are the regular columns, including John Lubans's witty "On Managing," Bob Moran's insightful "Where Is Our Future?" and Bonnie Osif's helpful "Manager's Bookshelf." Columnists of this caliber make my editorial job easy.

When you read the contents of this issue of *LA&M*, you will find clear and incontrovertible evidence that this division

is dynamic, vibrant, and growing stronger every day. Here's hoping that many of you will be able to share in Annual Conference celebrations. Having achieved the milestone of its fiftieth anniversary is a testimony to LAMA's enduring health, fitness, and relevance.

As for yours truly, at fifty, well . . . let me check my cholesterol level and get back to you on that.