



President's Message

Gina Millsap

Is Your Meebo Status Set to "Away"? Or Are You Ready for the Thing Called Change?

Wondering about the title? This sign is posted in my library's telephone reference room. The

"Meebo status" refers to a message on an instant message board that shows the user is away from the computer or has stepped out. With all the change happening in our profession now, none of us can afford to be away for any length of time. When I was a reference librarian (in the previous century), we dreamed about having all resources at our fingertips. We spent lots of time running around physically gathering all the "stuff" we needed to provide great reference service. Now we're there. The key as always with great change is to provide even greater service. That's my goal and wish for LLAMA in the coming year.

Hi, I'm Gina Millsap, LLAMA president for 2009-10. I'm proud to serve all of you and eager to work with our board, section and committee chairs, and all our colleagues. I've just completed making committee appointments and it's exciting and humbling to connect with and learn more about those of you who volunteer your time and expertise to provide wonderful continuing education and networking opportunities for our members.

We talk a lot about change—how to manage it, lead it, reward those who embrace it, and work with those who don't. How well do we practice what we preach in our libraries and in our professional association? This year, LLAMA members will have a chance to find out. Think of it this way. Last year we *changed* our name to include the word leadership. Now we have to demonstrate that leadership.

As I write this, I'm preparing to facilitate a strategy session at the July 11, 2009, LLAMA board meeting at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. Former President Molly Raphael, members of the LLAMA board executive committee, and our LLAMA staff leadership—Executive Director Kerry Ward and Continuing Education Coordinator Fred Reuland—have spent the past several months brainstorming

about how to help LLAMA be more strategic. We determined from the beginning to draw on the collective wisdom of our members and our leadership. That wisdom and experience is formidable.



Why a strategy session? Isn't LLAMA doing just fine? It is doing fine, but fine isn't good enough. The economic recession aside, membership and participation in professional associations in virtually all professions is projected to decline over the next decade. If we're going to grow and remain relevant to all generations of library leaders, we must change and model the behaviors and best practices that we talk about, read about, and sometimes even practice. As facilitator, my job is to ask the questions that draw on all the expertise and thinking styles in the room. Getting to the right question is not easy, but here's what we're asking that day and to all of you reading this. It's based on one primary assumption that comes directly from our vision.

Here's the vision from LLAMA's Strategic Plan: "LLAMA will be the foremost organization developing present and future leaders in library and information services."

Who owns this vision and who will make it happen? The answer: us! If this is us and what we want to be, we must work together to get there.

For the purposes of our strategy session, we're restating the vision to make it a bit more specific and action-oriented: "LLAMA will position itself to become the go-to division in ALA for leadership education, training, discussion, and best practices."

And here are the questions we focus on together:

- Why will LLAMA do this?
- What will LLAMA do to achieve this?
- How will LLAMA achieve this?
- Who in LLAMA will help make this happen?

What will the outcomes be? I don't know, but here's my hope: What should happen through great discussion and synergy is that we'll answer a whole other series of questions that relate directly to the goals and objectives in LLAMA's strategic plan. We have a great plan. It has all the

continued on page 160

Gina Millsap (gmillsap@tscpl.org) is Executive Director of Topeka and Shawnee County (Kans.) Public Library and president of LLAMA.

key elements for success. We just have to figure out how to own it and work on it cohesively and with a shared vision.

Some of those other questions that we need to answer are:

- How do we define and stay focused on what matters most to LLAMA members?
 - How do we increase the value of a membership in LLAMA?
 - How does LLAMA generate revenues to allow us to provide the kinds of services and continuing education that our members want?
 - At the end of the day, how do we know LLAMA is a successful organization?
 - What are our performance measures?
 - What are the products or deliverables?
 - What will we do to grow and strengthen LLAMA through diversity?
- Do we have a good understanding of why members join, why they stay, and how they select a section?
 - How do we create that shared vision and resulting action that sections and committees will buy into and help implement?
 - What are the issues we should be discussing now and in the future?
 - How will we obtain the type of environmental scanning necessary to identify and understand those issues?
 - How can we tie our continuing education initiatives to the Certified Public Library Administrator (CPLA) program and other certification programs?
 - How do we integrate ALA's initiatives and priorities into LLAMA's strategic thinking and initiatives?

I'll be sharing the results of the strategy session via LLAMA's website and ALA Connect.

listic collection development to assessing library services. We are especially proud of our continuing Perspectives on Leadership series. In this issue, experience is drawn from a variety of library professionals—an educator, a public library director, and an academic library dean—as well as the views of a well-known leadership and communications specialist. Our regular team of columnists is included here, and with a special “thank-you” as these busy people spend a lot of time each quarter putting together interesting, educational, and informative columns and they do so on a voluntary basis.

Look for *LL&M* at its new online home in January 2010 (a link will be provided through www.ala.org/llama).

References and Notes

1. Quote taken from www.metapress.com/home/main.mpx (accessed July 31, 2009).
2. Dyan Machan, “Author, Author!” *Smart Money* 18, no. 7 (July 2009).
3. Stephen Baker, “The Web Knows What You Want,” *Business Week*, no. 4140 (July 27, 2009).