

Asking the Candidates

Modeled after the format used by the League of Women Voters, Co-Associate Editors Pixey Anne Mosley and Wendi Arant Kaspar contacted the candidates for ALA president-elect, LLAMA president-elect, and LLAMA member-at-large to get their response to some specific questions about the future of the organization as it relates to their candidacy. The same questions were used for each office. Responses are presented exactly as provided by the various candidates.

ALA PRESIDENT-ELECT

Question 1: How would you position ALA strategically to remain relevant in the future, including increasing membership and involvement, furthering the mission of the organization, and providing value to the profession?

Sara Kelly Johns

ALA's mission is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all (ALA Policy 1.2).

This question is vital for the future of ALA and, due to ALA's function within our profession, for the future of libraries and librarianship in America. ALA recognized this in its Draft Strategic Plan. Therefore, my short answer to this question is that, as president of ALA, I will build upon the goals and objectives that ALA finalizes as its strategic plan and will design initiatives that effectively, efficiently, and nimbly implement those goals.

The longer answer is that increased participation in an organization increases membership and involvement. The Draft Strategic Plan acknowledges the need for increased participation with four objectives under the goal area of "Member Engagement." ALA is already pushing ahead with more technology applications; the newly revised website and ALA Connect are a beginning for increased communication, openness and transparency.

Value to the profession would increase greatly if ALA is seen as vigorously advancing the public image of strong libraries as crucial to communities, to universities, to schools, to learners of all ages. The successful latest public relations initiatives, such as the I Love Libraries, En Tu Biblioteca, Add It Up, and @your library websites, indicate the need for more intense such efforts by the Association.



Sara Kelly Johns

Molly Raphael

"Libraries: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life," which can be found on the ALA website, captures my planned focus as ALA president. Together we can transform perceptions about libraries from being "nice to have" to "essential" through initiatives in ALA, its divisions, and grassroots efforts around the country. If we want to restore and sustain funding for all types of libraries, people must see libraries as essential for both learning and life. We need to use research and program evaluation results to make our case, as well as the personal stories of our lay advocates. LLAMA can make a significant contribution to making this transformation happen.

Just as our libraries respond to changing demographics, so must we in ALA. We need to continue investing in affordable, quality professional development for ALA members other than at conferences. The ALA brand is highly respected; we need to leverage that value for members. ALA/LLAMA can remain relevant through innovative thinking and forward-looking solutions. We must also be willing to make tough decisions as we did in moving the *ALA Handbook* and *LL&M* to online-only.

ALA and its divisions can thrive if they are seen as directly supporting not only our professional development but also our libraries.



Molly Raphael

Question 2: Please share your ideas for building collaboration opportunities for ALA to enhance services or find efficiencies.

Sara Kelly Johns

In October, 2008, the ALA executive board meeting participated in a facilitated discussion of *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* by Jim Collins, and every subgroup discussed taking down the "silos" that exist between the divisions and other units. ALA is ready for collaboration

between divisions and their committees. While on the AASL board, we undertook a study and reorganization of our committee structure, an activity that can streamline ALA as well and fits into the Draft Strategic Plan's Objective 2 of the Organizational Excellence Goal Area: "Enhance the association's organizational structure to meet the changing needs of the members." For instance, the current joint divisional committees, such as the ACRL/AASL Interdivisional Committee on Information Literacy, are a model for collaboration between divisions or committees with a common interest. With an organizational focus on literacy for all, that committee should be expanded to include representatives from PLA; public libraries have become much more involved with direct teaching. The collaboration of these three library types on such a committee would ensure that ALA approaches one segment of its Draft Vivid Description of the Desired Future: "As a result, all types of libraries are adequately funded, librarianship is a sought after profession, information is accessible to all and all people in the United States are literate."

Molly Raphael

We have some shining examples of collaboration in recent years. The process used to develop ALA-APA certification programs is another example.

ALA can enhance collaboration through:

- Investing not only in software like ALAConnect but also in software that delivers continuing education in the workplace
- Marketing these investments so that members are aware of the benefits of these tools
- Strengthening ALA members' capacity to use collaborative tools through online tutorials and other support
- Offering incentives for collaboration across ALA's "silos," perhaps even financial ones, to encourage ALA member leaders and staff to think about collaboration from the beginning
- Developing ways for ALA members to participate in areas of interest across divisions so that we stop duplicating committees that already exist in another ALA silo
- Encouraging ALA units to look more toward joint task forces and ad hoc committees with limited life spans
- Promoting the use of social networking software to build and expand communities of practice

Question 3: What do you see as the primary purpose for members to attend the Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting, and how do you see traditional conference activities changing in the future?

Sara Kelly Johns

The Midwinter Meeting is the work of the Association, networking, exhibits, and professional learning. The opportunity for face-to-face connections with your fellow committee and board members means intensive work. With increased opportunities to connect between conferences, meetings have become more focused, creative, and effective. It was not long ago that almost all meetings at Midwinter were the main opportunities for working together. Now, with events like chat opportunities on ALA Connect for committees (as well as places to post, comment and load documents) beginning to take the place of e-mails loaded with documents—which took the place of weighty deliveries in our physical mailboxes—meetings at Midwinter are streamlined, and the outcomes are higher-quality.

There were once fears that libraries digitizing their historical collections and putting them online would see a decrease in the number of people visiting them, devaluing collections. Instead, many libraries are now part of genealogical and historical tourism movements, just one of the reasons for today's increased use. I applaud the upcoming virtual components of the PLA and ALA conferences and suspect that conference revenues will not decrease drastically. Virtual attendance will result in a more engaged membership and may well increase the need and desire to attend in following years.

Molly Raphael

Midwinter is primarily for face-to-face business meetings, opportunities for networking, and learning about what's new. A growing number of ALA members question the need for Midwinter, as collaborative software becomes more available and robust and as the cost of attending Midwinter keeps rising. We should rethink Midwinter, move more committee work to collaborative electronic environments, and consider turning Midwinter into a smaller, regional conference with programs.

Annual Conference, with its extensive program offerings, provides a major opportunity for professional development for library workers and supporters. Unlike ALA division conferences, the ALA Annual Conference offers a rare opportunity for cross-fertilization across all types of libraries, where members learn together by learning from each other. Exhibits draw thousands to see the grandest of library "shows" imaginable, while ALA governance and committee work continues simultaneously.

Face-to-face meetings and opportunities to network continue to be important to most of us. Yet costs of conference attendance make participation difficult for many. If we invest in offering a rich virtual conference, as well as look at how we can repackage conference program content to distribute it in another form to our membership, then we can address the needs of more of our members.

LLAMA PRESIDENT-ELECT

Question 1: How would you position LLAMA strategically to remain relevant in the future, including increasing membership and involvement, furthering the mission of the organization, and providing value to the profession?

Frank Allen

Libraries in the twenty-first century are increasingly going to be in the marketing business. A marketing orientation focuses the organization outwardly toward meeting the needs of its constituency, and upwardly toward appealing to its funding sources. As a successful market-driven organization, LLAMA will want to continue to examine its mission from an external perspective and provide value to its members by helping them position their libraries to prosper. For itself, LLAMA may wish to bring in outside consultants who specialize in keeping professional associations healthy. For its members and the library community, LLAMA may want to encourage programming on topics such as branding, competitive advantage, and user studies. This intensive market focus could be an additional way for LLAMA to distinguish itself from other library organizations.



Frank Allen

Janine Golden

I believe that LLAMA should increase efforts toward recruiting/involving future leaders to remain relevant.

Year One

Create a closer relationship with Graduate LIS Schools by identifying instructors teaching management/leadership courses and creating an instructor survey to learn the quality/quantity of LLAMA promotion existing in these courses.



Janine Golden

Year Two

With these faculty and the ALA Chapters Relations Office, create a survey for student membership chapters and students enrolled in management/leadership courses to provide student input on: knowledge of LLAMA, who are its members, how widespread the fallacy is that LLAMA is only for library managers, student interest, and promotion ideas.

Year Three

Collaborate with NMRT, the Chapters Relations Office, and LLAMA's Marketing and Membership Committees to create

strategies based on evaluation of the survey data.

This three-year plan creates the opportunity to examine LLAMA, establishes the possibility of increasing membership and involvement, includes all types of libraries, and provides value to the profession by targeting the tentative Draft Strategic Plan goal area of Building the Profession, Objective 2, ensure that library education reflects the core values of the profession, future needs, and community needs, and Objective 4, increase ALA activities in assisting library recruitment and retaining a quality library workforce.

Question 2: Please share your ideas for building collaboration opportunities for LLAMA to enhance services or find efficiencies.

Frank Allen

- Reinforce the value that academic and public libraries can offer to each other by jointly sponsoring programs, workshops, webinars, and preconferences which feature best practices on given topics across organization types. Possible partnerships: PLA and ACRL.
- Consider partnerships with library education faculty who are doing research on the future of the profession, strategic thinking and today's (and tomorrow's) patron behaviors and learning styles. Possible partnerships: ALISE.
- Team up with marketing faculty in colleges and universities, marketing professionals in city and county governments, and possibly corporate marketing experts. Bring these professionals together for programs, preconferences and regional style institutes.

Janine Golden

Through mentorship programs, ALA can build collaboration opportunities, enhance services, and find efficiencies by examining where it is before planning a direction. LLAMA would spearhead a study of mentoring programs existing in all ALA committees and round tables by producing a survey to identify which divisions have a mentoring program, and then create a collaborative of members from these divisions to investigate the best of the best strategies used. Rather than competing for mentors/mentees, this group would create, then engage a model to be generalized for all divisions, with each group then individualizing its own strategies. Two major outcomes of this collaboration include mentor sharing and combining efforts at conference presentations. This group led by LLAMA would "create opportunities to 'share next practices.'" (Objective 2, ALA's Strategic Draft Plan goal area of Transforming Libraries).

Question 3: What do you see as the primary purpose for members to attend the Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting, and how do you see traditional conference activities changing in the future?

Frank Allen

While Web-based program delivery is certainly a part of twenty-first century professional development, it is going to be challenging for an organization to exist solely or even primarily in a virtual state. An important element to any professional organization is in-person collaboration, networking, and professional collegiality. LLAMA needs to build and maintain a multipronged approach toward professional development: (1) Continue traditional face-to-face programs, preconferences, and the occasional institute, and (2) provide Web-based delivery with an emphasis on low cost, and minimal hardware/software requirements to create a low barrier for entry. The advantages of web-based delivery are convenience and affordability, with the latter especially important to those earlier in their career. (3) Couple formal gatherings with social opportunities. One idea would be to bring back the Friday night social reception and orientation for new members at ALA Annual, which creates an excellent kickoff to the conference.

Janine Golden

I believe Midwinter is primarily used by committee members to discuss planned outcomes for the Annual Conference. However, because of decreasing organizational budgets, many talented professionals are restricted from participating in these activities. Here technology can be better utilized.

ALA could provide further encouragement to increase online communication by committee members during the working year so that a drafted outcome is in place for Midwinter committee approval and/or further discussion if need be. Rather than members initially meeting at midwinter, encouraging this previous communication would save time so that meeting hours/days at Midwinter can be reduced, and participation can exist by those members not able to afford the mid-winter expense. A number of committees are using technology such as ALA blogs and discussion lists to communicate with their members, but the emphasis needs to be on bringing the drafted outcome to the Midwinter table rather than it beginning there. With popular use of resources such as Skype, Bb, Wimba, and so on. ALA could encourage better use of this technology for member preparation for Midwinter sessions.

ALA could also encourage divisions/committees to increase the number of video conferences in present conference time during the Midwinter Meeting. According to LLAMA's website, the most recently presented Webinars were a big hit.

LLAMA MEMBER AT LARGE CANDIDATES

Question 1: What do you see as most important in the role of LLAMA's Member at Large position?

Stephanie Beverage

As Member at Large, I think it is important to try to connect LLAMA's activities and plans to the needs and issues from the field. Being a voice for the average LLAMA member is crucial—if we aren't keeping our finger on the pulse of the membership, then we aren't going to be able to provide the kinds of value services that support the members in their daily work and lives. One of my strengths as a leader is that I am able to see the big picture and to see how things interrelate. As Member at Large for LLAMA, I can bring that perspective to issues as they arise and provide a bridge from the membership to the Board.



Stephanie Beverage

Mary Frances Burns

The Member at Large (MAL) is able to bring an independent perspective to the board, since the MAL is not representing any other section or committee. Aside from attending board meetings and any other divisional activities required of the board, such as "meet and greets" and fundraising activities, the MAL has no specific duties. Because of this, the MAL can be assigned to ad hoc projects, and is usually free to attend some section meetings on behalf of the board.



Mary Frances Burns

Question 2: What challenges do you see facing the Member at Large position as the organization continues to evolve?

Stephanie Beverage

Serving as a representative in any organization brings obligations and challenges. With the changes in the profession, the changes in professional associations and the changing world we live in, making sure that we are really focused on the needs of our members will be of the utmost importance. Keeping up to speed on new trends and issues and connecting to the membership as a whole will be a challenge.

Mary Frances Burns

While a Member at Large may have more flexibility to accept unanticipated assignments as delegated by the board, these may end up requiring a larger time commitment than was expected or that the MAL is able to give. Since personal calendars are usually set prior to Midwinter or Annual, there may be some delay in the implementation of any assignments at conference.

Also, because the MAL is not representing a specific section or committee, it might be easy to stay aloof from the proceedings. For those people using this position as a “stepping stone” rather than as a chance to serve LLAMA, this could be a problem.