

LLAMA Voter's Guide, 2012

Based on the format used by the League of Women Voters, Associate Editor Beth Blakesley contacted the candidates for ALA president-elect and LLAMA president-elect to get their responses 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.

Candidates for ALA President



Gina Milsap is Chief Executive Officer of Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library and former President of LLAMA. More information at www.ginajmillsap.com



Barbara Stripling is Assistant Professor of Practice at Syracuse University and former President of AASL. More information at <http://www.barbarastripling.org/>.

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?

Millsap: ALA and its divisions, like LLAMA, will remain relevant if members perceive that there are incentives for belonging and participating in their professional association. While there isn't a one-size-fits-all for why people join and support ALA, we have learned there are some common themes.

As LLAMA president, I worked with our leadership to determine what is important to members. Early in their careers, librarians and students are looking for mentors, ways to grow their professional networks, to practice skills they may not have the opportunity to in their current positions and to make their mark in a competitive environment. Veteran librarians are eager to share what they know, to give back to the profession and practice skills they may not have the opportunity to do otherwise. LLAMA is responding with programs and services that meet those needs.

I believe in putting your money where your mouth is. As ALA president, I would listen to members and facilitate the investment of resources into programs and services they have told us they want and will find most valuable. That will mean seeking feedback from members and finding out why colleagues are choosing not to join. My blueprint will be ALA's 2012 strategic plan. <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/missionhistory/plan>

Stripling: Through my experience as director of over 1200 school libraries in New York City as well as my service on ALA Executive Board and Council, I have learned that the foundation of any strategic position is a unified mission and core values. ALA's Strategic Plan provides that framework. My own thinking is closely aligned with this plan, with an emphasis on transforming libraries.

One of my strengths is translating mission into effective actions. Our libraries are facing a complex environment due to economic pressures, advances in technology, new laws and community priorities, and expanding global information access. As ALA President, I will use a collaborative leadership model to engage our membership in flexible, interactive, and provocative thinking so that we can adapt our strategies as our members' needs change.

To increase membership and involvement, ALA must become more inclusive by recruiting library workers who are new to the field and who come from diverse backgrounds. We must retain our members and add value to membership by offering more opportunities for members to engage meaningfully through dynamic interest groups originating from the members themselves. Finally, ALA should add value to membership by providing ongoing virtual and live professional development and by engaging members in conversations on professional issues.

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

Millsap: There are a number of issues and resources that virtually all divisions and units need and expend time and money trying to achieve. Here are two examples. The first is web presence. A robust website that delivers resources, services, and communication is critical especially when that may be the only contact many members have with the association. Second is growing and maintaining membership. ALA, like many associations has been losing members and that's a problem because we rely on dues for much of our revenue. In each case there are multiple efforts at different levels throughout ALA devoted to these needs.

One of ALA's biggest assets – the choices it offers members (lots of divisions, round tables, committees, etc.) is also one of its biggest challenges. The way we organize ourselves doesn't necessarily lend itself to collaboration and pooling of resources to fix problems and attract members. The good news is – it can. I've spent the last 10 years facilitating process improvement in libraries. I would use that experience to encourage staff and members to “operate effectively, efficiently, creatively” as the strategic plan says, to work together to develop an organization-level approach to common needs and challenges.

Stripling: ALA is only as strong as the participation of its members. I know from my own experience that collaboration makes participation more effective. Collaboration within ALA is tricky, however, because it tends to be within silos and have limited impact on ALA as a whole.

I was intrigued by LLAMA's recent restructuring because it presents a model for building collaboration and enhancing services. ALA should give subunits the flexibility and authority to act on ideas that bubble up, resulting in innovation and risk-taking and ultimately producing better solutions and more engaged membership.

I also applaud LLAMA's efforts to create a flatter organization by appointing “connectors” to the board who convene collaborative work across the Association. ALA has taken a similar approach through divisional liaisons to committees and assemblies. ALA could benefit, however, by giving these liaisons the responsibility of accomplishing specific tasks through the collaborative group. The point is not to meet and greet; the point is to accomplish something worthwhile together.

Finally, I believe that ALA must embrace alternative viewpoints. I am known as a very thoughtful questioner. As President, I will build a culture that welcomes the honest exchange of diverse ideas, resulting in better decisions, stronger collaboration, and empowered individuals.

3. What do you see as the primary purpose for members to attend the annual and midwinter conferences and how do you see traditional conference activities changing in the future?

Millsap: The reason for attending conferences has already changed significantly with webinars. They're inexpensive, available and offer variety. For many members, education is still a primary driver for attending the annual conference. I don't think that will last if the way we present programs continues as it always has, using the sage or panel on the stage model as much as we do now.

Why have conferences? Demonstrating how we evolve from doing a job to becoming part of a profession. Giving librarians a sense of something bigger than themselves, their institution, their state and their country. Reinforcing our shared core values, while creating more awareness of and tolerance for diversity within librarianship. Learning leadership by observing exemplary leaders in action. Mentoring, coaching, networking, many more interactive experiences, and the sheer scale of exposure to colleagues, exhibitors, technology, etc. are essential to attract people and convince them and their libraries to spend money on travel.

I believe in organizing around the work. Once we decide what we will offer and do at conferences, then we decide how many we need. Maybe it's one, maybe it's two – it could be more if we're really successful in offering what is best experienced in person.

For more information, please visit www.ginajmillsap.com

Stripling: The primary purpose for attending conferences is personal interaction with colleagues. Certainly, social tools allow us to feel connected, but conferences provide real-time, back and forth conversations that allow us to build consensus through lively exchange. Conferences are also essential to help our members connect with library exhibitors and see a variety of products first-hand.

ALA's strength as a community is its diversity. At conferences, our members meet library workers from all types of libraries, a variety of political persuasions, and every interest imaginable. Without conference attendance, members are may stay in their most natural, and limited, niches. We are all strengthened when members become active participants in the ALA community.

In the future, we should move toward conference sessions where members engage with important issues (like the Conversations held at Midwinter 2012). Professional development sessions should be constructivist so that learners actively engage in the experience and build their own understandings. New types of sessions should be offered, such as speed dating with authors. Member groups should be able to organize ad-hoc interest sessions to explore current issues as an alternative to the traditional months-long approval process. Finally, conference sessions should be beginnings of substantive dialogues, not ends, and should be continued in the online environment.

Candidates for LLAMA President



Catherine Friedman is Associate University Librarian for User Services at University of California, San Diego.



Phil Tramdack is Director of Library Services at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania.

1. How would you position ALA strategically to remain relevant in

Friedman: In order for ALA to remain relevant in the future, it must continue to uphold and support our professional principles and values and must support the work and professional development activities of library staff and others who support libraries. Strategies for doing these things are well represented in ALA's Strategic Plan 2011-2015,

Tramdack: Membership will increase when more librarians see value in the organization. Appealing to young and new-to-the-profession librarians is key to increasing membership. The leadership needs to understand better the needs, priorities, and expectations of the next generation of librarians, and then to transform the organization accordingly. This

<p>the future, including increasing membership and involvement, furthering the mission of the organization, and providing value to the profession?</p>	<p>which I think does provide ALA with an outline and several goals for maintaining its relevancy. And these areas align well with the LLAMA Strategic Plan for the same period. I think it is critical for us to continue to focus on building and retaining a diverse and high-quality workforce engaged in the full range of library and library-related services. And we need to create and sustain an environment where discussions about, and support, for the transformation of libraries and library services can thrive. And if we do these things along with building advocacy skills and influencing information policy, then I think we will see our members continue their strong affiliation with and active involvement in our association.</p>	<p>includes creating new opportunities for involvement in ALA beyond service on committees and participation in program planning. School, public and academic librarians are looking for ways to play a more central role in their communities, and ALA's highest priority must be to help all librarians demonstrate that libraries in the 21st century are more vital and relevant than ever.</p> <p>Continuing education is an important mission of ALA, and an area where LLAMA has always created value recognized across the entire organization. ALA and LLAMA should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain the high quality of in-person conference programming; • Greatly expand web programming offerings; • Move towards a single, continuous program proposal and vetting process to identify timely web programs while nurturing traditional conference programming; • Develop the "My ALA" strategy to push content to the members according to personal preferences.
<p>2. Please share your ideas for building collaboration opportunities for ALA to enhance services or</p>	<p>Friedman: I appreciate all of the collaborative work in which ALA and its members already participate and believe this is one of the strengths of our organization. But I do see that there are still other opportunities which ALA might pursue. I think we need to be more collaborative across the offerings of our divisions. We should be looking for ways to collaborate in providing educational and professional development opportunities both at conference and throughout the year rather than</p>	<p>Tramdack: ALA's largest area of collaboration has always been with vendors who provide a vast array of products and services to libraries, and who contribute to, and benefit from the twice-yearly conference trade shows. ALA should explore collaboration opportunities that increase the value to vendors of participating in conferences and supporting ALA initiatives, and at the same time increase the value returned to the membership</p>

<p>find efficiencies.</p>	<p>competing to do so. And I think we should look outside of our “industry” to partner with other associations such as Educause and the American Management Association. One thing that I think we can do to enhance efficiency is adopting some new collaborative approaches to how we provide basic support to our member leaders. For example, we organize and plan several different orientation and organizational leadership development activities across ALA. It seems that we could look at ways to work together across the association to provide these more consistently while making greater use of technology to do so.</p>	<p>through vendor contacts.</p> <p>Collaborations between ALA and other professional organizations benefit the respective organizations and memberships. Examples include the AIA and IIDA awards programs that increase librarian exposure to architects, interior designers and vendors.</p> <p>To achieve efficiencies it will be necessary to enhance the work of the committees and discussion groups that create value for the whole organization, while finding ways to reduce the cost of the units within ALA that create less value. Creative collaboration and partnering opportunities could help ALA achieve such efficiencies without depriving members of leadership, advocacy, and education opportunities gained through participation in the organization.</p>
<p>3. What do you see as the primary purpose for members to attend the annual and midwinter conferences and how do you see traditional conference activities</p>	<p>Friedman: I don’t think there is a single primary purpose for members attending conferences. Many come for professional development, others come to network, some come to see new products and talk to vendors, and others come to support the values and work of our profession through organizational activities. And some come to do all of these things. And these reasons can change depending on where one is in one’s career. As for how these conferences will change in the future, in the short run I see them changing as we make better use of technology. I do think that most committee work will migrate to taking place virtually. This will allow more members to participate in the learning and advocacy components of conferences rather than sitting in meetings. And I do see us working</p>	<p>Tramdack: Conference attendees participate in the process and governance of the organization; create and attend programs, network with professionals of like interest and outlook, attend the exhibits, and make contact with vendors.</p> <p>While the continuing education mission of the organization expands in the direction of more web content, there will be plenty of subject matter that benefits from face-to-face conference presentation. The program planning process should channel programming either to the annual conference or to web delivery at an early stage of planning. The result will be stronger, relevant, timely, and continuous programming, without a loss of quality in</p>

<p>changing in the future?</p>	<p>towards better integrating the virtual and face-to-face so that there is the ability to have greater participation. Additionally, I see all the content shared at conferences quickly repackaged and made available over the web. I also think that some of the experimental activities currently underway, such as virtual town halls and interactive web-based educational opportunities, provide glimpses of how our conference experiences will evolve over time.</p>	<p>the annual conference programs.</p> <p>By using emerging technologies such as social media as the venue for continuously conducting the business of the organization, more of the work of the organization will be done between, rather than at the conferences. The object should be to make conferences more attractive to attendees and the vendors participating in the trade show by increasing the time available for attendees to visit the exhibits. The reward for efficiencies will be conferences that require less attendance at meetings, and offer more opportunities to go to programs and exhibits.</p>
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