



President's Message

Essential Ingredients: Equal Parts Inspiration & Reflection

Pat Hawthorne

Inspiration and reflection are essential to my professional life. Inspiration is easy to come by. Since becoming a librarian, I find it in all of you as my involvement in LLAMA and ALA is my ongoing source of inspiration. This summer in Anaheim, one of my inspirational moments was the wonderful John Cotton Dana Awards reception. As I listened to the descriptions of each award winner, I was struck by the deep dedication that the many amazing individuals and teams have for providing library services within their communities. The work of these professionals is meaningful and makes a real difference in their communities. The library settings varied in size, and the projects met various types of needs in the community. It was a wonderful reminder of the incredibly important work that libraries do every day all over the world. At each ALA Annual Conference and ALA Midwinter Meeting, I feel fortunate to come away with much inspiration (and some great ideas to try) as well as tremendous pride for our profession.

Reflection is a bit more challenging. The frenetic pace within our organizations and professional lives coupled with full personal lives seem to offer little opportunity for reflection, unless we are deliberate about it. More than a decade ago, I was introduced to the work of Donald Schon and his 1983 book, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Schon's extensive examination of the differences between reflection-in-action (observing our actions while they occur) and reflection-on-action (learning from previous experience by examining it) was transformative for me. According to Schon, the type of intuitive knowledge that practitioners generate from experience is equally important to the mastery of the factual and theoretical knowledge that defines a profession. I have come to believe reflection is as critical as inspiration to a professional. Choosing to reflect on specific activities and accomplishments is the opportunity to determine lessons learned and to improve practice.

As a human resources professional working in academic libraries, the concept of reflective practice resonates with my experience as a trainer and offers a framework that is useful for working with adult learners. Reflective practice begins with the pause – in that pause is the

chance to ask key questions that make you wonder what happened, why or why not, and question how might it have been done differently as well as how are you or your organization different as a result. The answers might be surprising or tough, but they are important to growth.

Reflective practice is about learning for me – and one of my core beliefs is that learning is central to leadership development. Developing as a leader means you must be continually learning about your profession, about your organization, and about yourself so that that you can practice mindful leadership.

What might this have to do with LLAMA? It has everything to do with LLAMA from my perspective. From my early involvement with LLAMA in the early 1990s, I have found many LLAMA members to be the ultimate reflective practitioners and leaders. Continually learning and willing to share their knowledge, leadership lessons, and wisdom, these individuals have served as my role models of reflective practitioners and mindful leaders. At every stage of my career, when I needed resources, advice, guidance, experts, I found them in the LLAMA organization and in LLAMA members. When I was assigned a new project or responsibility, I first turned to LLAMA; so much so that I came to think of LLAMA as the “just in time” division – they had what I needed each time “just in time” for my need. LLAMA also provided me with opportunities to contribute and grow at various times in my career.

With this in mind, I’m excited about the presidential initiatives ahead this year – many of which I feel will provide opportunities for inspiration and reflection for LLAMA members and (hopefully) for future LLAMA members.

With a new LLAMA strategic plan in place for 2012 – 2015, we have the opportunity to practice mindful leadership in guiding LLAMA forward while striving to meet member needs and provide value for the membership. In the first operational year of a 3-year plan, we will learn what works and what does not. The LLAMA Board will be asking LLAMA leaders to reflect on what works and what does not so we can develop an operational planning process that maps to our financial planning process in support our strategic initiatives and priorities.

Last year, during my Vice President/President-Elect year in the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA), I had the opportunity to listen to members. Based on various conversations with Emerging Leaders, Spectrum Scholars, and early-career professionals, I heard a need and desire for more continuing education that focuses on active, purposeful, and mindful career planning that comes from being informed by the best practices of career experts. Past President Janine Golden made career development her presidential theme and her presidential program featured Heather Krasna, a career development professional and author of *Jobs That Matter: Finding a Stable, Fulfilling Career in Public Service*. I’m delighted to build on Janine’s presidential theme by offering the LLAMA Career Institute as one of my presidential initiatives.

The LLAMA Career Institute is a 4-hour workshop that will be offered at ALA Midwinter Meeting in Seattle on Friday, January 25, 2013, from 1 to 5 p.m. “Planning Your Next Career Move: Developing a Game Plan” will feature Elizabeth Atcheson, a Seattle-based executive and career

coach who works with individuals as well as libraries. In this institute, participants will have the opportunity to learn how to build their professional network and manage their online presence as well as how to refine a professional narrative. The value of conducting informational interviews and working with mentors as methods for exploring career interests will be discussed along with how to choose appropriate professional commitments. Atcheson will also outline and discuss the interpersonal, management, and leadership skills critical to promotions including communication, collaboration, recruiting and retaining talent, and managing change. My hope is this offering will provide participants with inspiration and time for reflection.

Another offering will be the joint ACRL-LLAMA Presidential Program. As 2012 – 2013 ACRL President Steven J. Bell wrote in the September issue of *C&RL News*, ACRL and LLAMA will offer a joint presidential program at the 2013 ALA Annual Conference featuring Karol Wasylyshyn, a Philadelphia-based licensed psychologist and executive coach. Her works (*Standing on Marbles: Three Leader Types in Verse and Imagery* and *Behind the Executive Door: Unexpected Lessons for Managing Your Boss & Career*) provide wonderful examples of reflective practice.

And at the ALA level, ALA President Maureen Sullivan is asking leaders throughout ALA to work with her to “reimagine ALA”. The LLAMA Executive Committee will be working on this initiative at the Fall Executive Board Meeting in Chicago later in October. Another ALA Presidential Initiative coming together under Maureen’s leadership is planning for the launch of a leadership development program for ALA. Both of these initiatives require reflective practice and mindful leadership. We will keep you updated on progress and seek your input.

I am excited about the coming year and I am deeply honored to serve as LLAMA president. This division has been my ALA home for more than a decade and has provided me with much opportunity to learn and grow. Many talented and dedicated members have been and continue to be my role models and inspiration.

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