

LLAMA President's Message

Catherine Friedman

As I start my year as LLAMA President, I want to first say hello and thank you to all new and renewing members of LLAMA. When I was asked to consider running for LLAMA President, I spent time reflecting on why I would take on this commitment when my work life, like for so many of us, is so all encompassing. My library, like many others, has been undergoing a complete organizational restructuring and my attention is certainly needed for that. But as I continued to consider running, I came up with the following reasons for why I would want to take on this very important responsibility: 1) my fundamental belief in LLAMA and its mission, and 2) my interest in giving back to LLAMA and my fellow members in a meaningful way. For me, it is a great honor and privilege to have been chosen to lead LLAMA and I thank you for providing me with this opportunity.

In preparation for the start of our year in office, Barbara Stripling, ALA President 2013-14, asked each of the incoming Division Presidents to identify five words describing the goals of our presidencies. I selected the words: Responsive, Supportive, Collaborative, Value, and Excellence. I selected these words because they represent what I believe LLAMA should be for its members and capture what I aspire to be as LLAMA's leader.

I would characterize a responsive association as one that is willing to change and evolve to continue to meet member needs and interests. How responsive is LLAMA? In response to input from members and non-members who are finding themselves in a variety of new leadership roles, during the past three years LLAMA has made a concentrated effort to provide professional development and learning opportunities targeted towards early and mid-career professionals. At the last ALA Midwinter Conference, under the leadership of then LLAMA President Pat Hawthorne, LLAMA held its first pre-conference Career Institute. The main topic for this institute was career coaching. Due to that workshop's success, the LLAMA Career Institute will be held again this coming Midwinter in Philadelphia and will cover a different, but equally relevant topic. And several recent LLAMA webinars have focused on topics of interest to professionals early in their careers and it is planned that these will continue in the future with topics such as Finding Your Leadership Style.

In response to the need to better understand how LLAMA can support new library leaders, LLAMA established the position of New Leaders' Representative (NLR) to the LLAMA Board of Directors three years ago. The NLR is intended to bring a new

leader's perspective and ideas to LLAMA's decision making and planning. Leo Lo, who completed his term at the end of this Annual conference, was the inaugural NLR and brought great ideas to the Board. Additionally Leo was asked to author the new *New Perspectives in Leadership* column in LL&M. Please see Leo's column in this issue of LL&M. Following Leo in the NLR position is Natasha Dass-Ford, a librarian in the Cumberland County Public Library & Information Center in Fayetteville, N.C.

And lastly, in response to a recommendation received as part of a 3-year project executed by successive teams of ALA Emerging Leaders (EL), LLAMA will be working quickly towards establishing a New Professionals/New Leaders Section within our association. The EL project, under the guidance of LLAMA Past President Janine Golden, provided LLAMA with 1) an assessment of awareness levels and perceptions of Library and Information Science (LIS) professors and students regarding LLAMA, and 2) a set of strategies to engage and recruit new professionals into the association. The research found that while LIS professors knew about LLAMA, few were members and many were unaware of the benefits of LLAMA membership. As for the LIS students, the research results were even less favorable with only a small number of students having even a vague awareness of LLAMA. But when I shared the idea of establishing a new professionals section within LLAMA at the Associations Options Fair at the recent ALA Annual Conference, the response was overwhelmingly positive providing additional confirmation that this is a strategy that LLAMA should pursue. Over the next year, LLAMA will also seriously consider the other recommendations that came from the EL project.

So, the next question is – is LLAMA a supportive association? I believe this is the heart of what LLAMA does. It supports its members through a range of activities and services. One major way for how this is accomplished is through LLAMA's seven sections, all of which focus on providing professional development and support opportunities within their special interest areas. If a member is interested in continuing education, in connecting with and sharing information with others with similar interests, or in volunteering for service within the association, LLAMA offers a number of different opportunities at the section level to do this. LLAMA also offers the benefit of the journal you are currently reading. LL&M is a resource that supports each LLAMA member as they individually pursue skill development and continuing education. And lastly, LLAMA is supportive of career development in a very direct way through its mentoring program.

Is LLAMA a collaborative association? To this question, I would answer a resounding "yes". LLAMA is a professional community of more than 4,000 members and 2 staff who work together and with other associations to achieve outcomes and results that respond to and support the needs of our membership. The work of our many sections, section committees, and division committees provide evidence for this. We also

showed our collaborative nature in deciding to establish a New Leaders Discussion Group with the New Members Round Table and in the successful joint ACRL/LLAMA Presidents' Program that just happened at ALA Annual in Chicago. We are an association that encourages and supports establishing collaborations and partnerships that will help LLAMA meet the needs of its members.

So the last two questions are: Does LLAMA provide value? Does LLAMA embody excellence? If LLAMA is responsive, supportive, and collaborative - then I think LLAMA does provide value to its members and does exemplify excellence. But these are questions that are easier to answer for myself than to answer on behalf of the LLAMA membership. I encourage each LLAMA member to answer these questions for themselves and then determine what actions they feel should be taken to ensure that LLAMA continues to be, or becomes, what you think it should be. This is your professional organization and your professional community, and it can only be as excellent as we all make it.

As LLAMA President, I will focus my attention on continuing the strong leadership of Pat Hawthorne and Janine Golden by working with LLAMA leadership, LLAMA staff, and with you, the LLAMA membership, to continue to make LLAMA what I think it should be: a responsive, supportive, and collaborative professional organization focused on meeting the educational and professional development needs of its members. I encourage you to contact me (crf@ucsd.edu) if you have ideas that would support me in doing this.

Catherine Friedman (crf@ucsd.edu) is Associate University Librarian for Academic Services for the Library at the University of California, San Diego.

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