

LLAMA President's Message Meeting Leadership Challenges – How LLAMA Can Help

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What is a challenging issue you've faced recently when leading a team or unit or program or library? Was it standing in front of your team to present your ideas? Was it taking responsibility for leading a unit-wide project through implementation? Was it figuring out a way to effectively communicate your library's value to your community and increase funding? Was it trying to encourage strategic thinking within your library so that you could set a course for organizational change? What has it been for you? For me, it has been sustaining momentum and optimism over the past two years while leading my library through a major reorganization.

Leadership is complicated whether it is library leadership or leadership outside the library setting. And as much as we would like to start at the beginning of any of these activities with the right skills and knowledge to carry us through, we often don't. We find ourselves lacking the skills, information, experience, or confidence that we need to successfully lead others through the unknown. In such situations, what can we do to overcome these gaps? Where or to whom can we reliably turn? Reflecting upon my experience and what I have found most useful, my response has been to regularly turn to the resources provided by LLAMA and to my LLAMA colleagues. Our association is both a network of knowledgeable and supportive individuals interested in sharing with and learning from each other, as well as a reservoir of resources that can provide us just-in-time and sustained support.

- For example, for those of us who are less than comfortable about public speaking, there is the column in LL&M, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2013), written by Leo Lo titled *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Public Speaking*. In this, Leo shares his initial fear of public speaking and then the techniques he has learned and applied to overcome it.
- And for those who feel the need to develop or strengthen their project management skills, there is the LLAMA webinar "Project Management: A Skill Set Every Leader Needs." This webinar covers the core concepts of project management and how they have been used for successful implementation of specific library projects.

- If you need to learn more about effectively communicating your value to others, perhaps a good starting place is the LLAMA archived webinar, “Library Outcomes: Stories that Matter,” available from the Continuing Education section of the LLAMA website. Viewers of this recording can learn how to gather and use stories to communicate goals and to produce outcomes-based examples of library success.
- And for those who want to more fully understand strategic thinking and how it can be applied in libraries, there is the article by Haycock, Cheadle and Bluestone, LL&M, Vol. 26, No. 3/4 (2012), called *Strategic Thinking and Leadership*. In this, the authors define the phrase, compare it to strategic planning, and provide practical ways to apply the concept within a library organization.

For me, to help me with my challenge, in addition to attending LLAMA programs and sessions, I talked to LLAMA colleagues both at and away from conferences to glean wisdom and support that has sustained me so I could do the same for those within my organization. And I have to mention that I never overlook the value of serendipity that can occur from these experiences. In one LLAMA session on the unrelated topic of succession planning, I heard someone quote “Professor” Irwin Corey, a comic who describes himself as the “The World’s Foremost Authority,” as saying that “if we don’t change direction soon, we’ll end up where we’re going.” For me, this quirky, unexpected quote came at an opportune moment, priceless because it gave me a simple way to describe why my organization had to change. We had to reorganize so that we could go in a direction that was aligned with the future needs and priorities of our students and faculty rather than one that was leading to irrelevance. We had to change direction so that we didn’t end up where we were going. Just learning that quote deepened my appreciation for LLAMA and its activities and reinforced my commitment to it as my professional community.

I just returned from the Fall LLAMA Executive Committee meeting in Chicago. The LLAMA Executive Committee, which consists of the elected officers, Director-at-Large, Treasurer, Section Representative, and our two LLAMA staff, met for about a day to discuss and broadly plan future LLAMA activities. Prior to the meeting, I did a call to all of the chairs of the LLAMA division-level committees asking them to send me brief committee activity updates so that I could report out at the meeting. I was quite excited and encouraged by what I received, and I hope you are too. Here is a summary of what these committees are doing:

- Creating lists describing the competencies important to those wanting to be successful library leaders. These lists will be shared widely and can be used to help those trying to understand the competencies they will need to develop.
- Planning a face-to-face seminar for Midwinter 2014 in Philadelphia titled: “Who do you think you are? Finding your Leadership Style.” The seminar, based on a successful LLAMA webinar, will cover the subject of leadership styles and how different styles suit different situations. Everyone attending Midwinter is encouraged to attend this session which will take place on Sunday afternoon.
- Adding new faces to the Member Spotlight found on the LLAMA homepage. Check out your LLAMA colleagues who have already been in the spotlight. Any LLAMA member

can volunteer to be featured. Just go to that webpage and fill out the form.

- Ongoing management of the Mentoring Program. The mentor/mentee pairs for 2013-14 have been connected and are communicating. In November, recruitment for mentors and mentees for 2014-15 will begin. If you want to better understand the dynamics of mentoring, see the column by Jennifer Bartlett in LL&M, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2013). And do consider signing up for the program if you are interested.
- Planning for the 2014 LLAMA President's Program, which will take place at Annual 2014 in Las Vegas. The program will feature Carrie Messina, Vice-President of Human Resources for Wynn & Encore.
- Seeking and selecting new webinars that meet the needs of the LLAMA membership. During 2012-13, LLAMA organized 10 webinars on a variety of topics with more than 465 participants.
- Discussing and evaluating all the programming to take place at Annual 2014. The process is intended to make sure LLAMA programming is high quality and meets the needs of those attending the conference.

Remember that you are not alone. The whole of LLAMA is here working to support you as you develop and grow as a leader and is ready to help you meet the leadership challenges that present themselves to you.

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