

LLAMA President's Message

Looking Ahead

Diane Bruxvoort



As your new President, I'd like to take a minute to introduce myself. I've worked as a professional librarian in public and academic libraries for over three decades in Texas, Florida, and now in Aberdeen, Scotland. I've been in leadership and/or management positions for most of that time since my second position was as the assistant manager of a branch library. Libraries have seen many changes in these three decades – a huge understatement – but the need for leadership in our institutions is a constant. My most recent challenge brought me here to Aberdeen as the University Librarian and Director at the University of Aberdeen. As the chief administrative officer my role is 99% leadership. Operational functions are handled by others and my role is to set direction, ensure resources, build collaborative relationships across the institution and the profession, and be certain all staff have satisfying work that satisfies our users. Replace “staff” with “members” in the previous sentence and it could stand as my job description as your president. I look forward to a challenging and satisfying year working with members across the association as we continue to build a productive and inclusive organization.

As with all associations today LLAMA has many challenges ahead, but we also collectively have a wealth of knowledge and abilities that will stand us in good stead. At annual conference in Las Vegas we asked for input from our members through an open kitchen table conversation session and through discussions with our executive board members. As usual you came through with great ideas and interesting possibilities. The people involved in the discussions were an interesting mix of new and seasoned (not old) members. I have copious notes from the meetings along with a stack of post-it notes used by the attendees to add their notes to mine and bring emphasis to important points. The slips are currently grouped by topic and subtopic on a table in my office, and will serve as a springboard for further discussion, for programs and changes in the coming year, and will inform a new strategic directions document in 2015.

Very broad themes emerging from the discussions included membership, programming, networking, and restructuring, and I will be addressing these in detail in future messages. Today I'd like to discuss two slips that didn't fit well into any of the categories and were basically at opposite ends of the operational spectrum. The first slip put forward the idea that if LLAMA is struggling for members maybe its work should simply be subsumed into the type of library (PLA, ACRL, etc.), and LLAMA end its existence as an organization. Now before you react with righteous indignation (as I wanted to) consider that when looking at anything you should consider all angles if you want the whole picture even if you quickly dismiss some of them. LLAMA as an organization needs to be able to identify the work they want to accomplish and their audience for this work. Who are we, what are we doing, and for whom? These are legitimate questions that may help us identify the strong core that needs to remain intact as we consider questions such as restructuring.

The second slip went the other direction. The writer suggested that LLAMA put on their own conference. It works for PLA and ACRL, why not for us? Would this be an opportunity to highlight the services we have to offer? Could it be occasional, regional, serve specific audiences? Again, this seems like a slightly crazy idea. In tough times the tendency is to contract not expand, but again we need to look for ways to move forward and consider all options in doing so.

The reality is that the future of LLAMA probably lies somewhere in between these two extremes. I strongly believe that we have too much to offer to let ourselves be subsumed, but I also don't see us putting on a conference in the near future. I do see a group of professionals working together to tackle questions such as: How do we serve all types of libraries? Can we work together more on a regional basis? How do we help members who don't attend conference be actively involved in the organization? Can we be more collaborative, within and without the association? We will answer these questions and more, and it's my privilege to work with each of you as we develop plans for this vital and productive organization, today and in the future.

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