

LLAMA President's Message

Who Are We?

Diane Bruxvoort



As we continue to look at the roles and goals for our organization, it is important to consider our membership. Who are we? Are we a homogenous group with a small set of specific goals? No? Okay, a diverse group with a broad range of tasks to accomplish? Yes? Okay, now define diverse and how broad is the range, what are the tasks? The reality is that as a leadership organization we cover the entire of range of libraries and librarians, although we have not always acted on this diversity. LLAMA is known as a “second-tier division.” This means that librarians typically first join the division that represents their type of library: academics join ACRL, public librarians join PLA, school librarians join AASL, etc. They then consider a specialty division: leadership (LLAMA), information technology (LITA), reference (RUSA), etc. While being second may not be optimal, being a speciality division gives us a broad latitude for appealing to librarians. Leaders are everywhere. If we provide a reason we can recruit members from school libraries, special libraries, prison libraries, academic and public libraries: the list is endless.

The key to the diversification of LLAMA into an organization of all types of librarians is to provide the professional development opportunities, networking, and skills training for librarians across the spectrum of leadership in libraries. LLAMA currently does an excellent job of providing these opportunities across a member's career path. From the New Professionals Section to the Career Institute to Professional Development programming to Dialogue with Directors, programming, networking and mentoring around leadership is available for librarians at all points in their career. The next step is to be certain that all types of libraries and librarians are represented through these and other services.

To be an effective and growing organization we need to learn to tell our own story. For a group of people with advanced written and verbal skills we are not always great at this. This is a skill set that we need to be certain we have as leaders within our own organization, and it is certainly transferable to our professional organization. I'll have the opportunity at the midwinter conference to speak on the topic of “Building a Career.” The premise of the presentation is that we spend a lot of time building websites, databases, buildings, and a dozen other programs and

services, but we often don't take time to consciously think about building our careers. The same premise applies to LLAMA. We all spend a lot of time presenting programs, serving on committees, and attending conferences: but we need to take the time and energy to articulate all the great services offered by our organization, build new services where appropriate, and be able to tell our story.

We can help our members speak with one voice by providing a clear message: LLAMA is an organization of library leaders who work together to provide professional development, networking, and leadership training across the spectrum of libraries and library careers. That's my current version of a LLAMA elevator speech. It is somewhat aspirational, but that's okay. Everyone needs a goal.

Cheers,

Diane

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