

## LLAMA President's Message

Diane Bruxvoort



When I first considered the President's Messages for LL&M over my year in office they felt quite daunting, and I wondered if I had anything to say. Now that I'm writing the final message I find myself running out of time and space for all the things that need to be said. The final topic as I envisaged these messages is programming, but I'll also take a few minutes here to talk about strategic directions for LLAMA and the possibility of restructuring to bring our organization up-to-date encouraging long-term and new members to benefit from all that we have to offer and find their place in the organization.

LLAMA has a solid history of useful, interesting, and timely programming. Our sections and committees offer a full slate of programs at each conference, and Fred Reuland and the continuing education committee are building a respected webinar program. What else should we be doing, and how? Participants in the kitchen table conversations had several suggestions. The first is to do more cross-divisional programming. There are few topics that we present on that do not cross with other divisions and round tables. However, before moving to cross-divisional programs we need to start with cross-sectional programming. We often fall short with collaboration internal to our own division and need to see where we can work together to create strong programs and webinars.

The one topic that consistently arose in discussion with members is the need for practical management skills training – the topic that we probably address the least as each section concentrates on their own specific issues. Librarians tend to rise through the ranks into management and leadership positions, but often without any formal training, and there is a clear need for LLAMA to provide more in this area. Other requested topics include helping managers show the impact and value of the library, dealing with constant change, and best practices. There was also interest in looking outside of librarianship for ideas and perspectives that could inform our work. The final suggestion was for a webinar or tutorial to help first time attendees navigate conference. Programming has been (and continues to be) a strength for LLAMA, but it is imperative that we provide content to our members in forms beyond conference programming such as webinars, tutorials, and even e-books.

This brings us to strategic planning. The current strategic plan ends in 2015, so we need to make some decisions about next steps. The first step is to look back at the current three year

plan and analyse our successes and challenges. Past President Catherine Friedman is currently working on this analysis. In the meantime we are working on a new form of planning that puts forward Strategic Directions rather than a step by step plan. The previous plan was something like 15 pages long with a great deal of detail. The goal of the Strategic Directions document is to be a dynamic, nimble, and concise framework that each member understands. When making decisions about how we move forward any one of us should be able to articulate whether or not the idea, award, program, webinar, publication, etc. fits within our strategic directions and use this framework to inform our decision making.

LLAMA members consider themselves to be welcoming and open to new members. I know this because I feel this way and many have told me this is how they see themselves. However, new members tell a different story. They ask why they must be a member of a section or committee to attend the meetings or be on the email list. They report being uncomfortable just dropping in to a group where everyone knows each other, and the assignments are all made to the same people they have always gone to. Many have the impression that LLAMA is only for academic librarians, or at least for librarians that are already in leadership positions, and they don't understand our admittedly arcane acronyms. There are misperceptions here, but simply naming them such doesn't change anything. We need to be certain that we are open and welcoming to all members of our community.

This brings us to restructuring. Frankly, it's a scary word. Many of us have spent years in sections and on committees and would happily not change a thing. This would be a mistake. Our structure has not changed in decades, while the library world has completely redefined itself in that same time period. LLAMA is an organization of leaders who want to be a resource for future leaders and to the library community, and this is an area where we can show leadership within ALA. AS we all struggle to maintain membership and relevance LLAMA could/should be the first to redefine our structure with the goal of creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century membership organization. I ask you to begin to reconsider what you would like LLAMA to look like. What organization could work for this service organization? Do we need tweaking or an overhaul? We control our own fate if we take steps to do so.

On a final note, I'd like to put in a plug for the President's program at annual conference in San Francisco. Art Barter, CEO of the Servant Leadership Institute, will speak on Servant Leadership comparing the power model of leadership to the service model addressing how these models affect employee engagement and productivity. There will be opportunity to assess your current organizational environment and help in defining your role when influencing change. Please join us for an engaging program that will inform our work at home and within ALA.

Best regards,  
Diane

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