

LLAMA President's Message

Pixey Anne Mosley



Conflict and change have become a part of our daily lives on multiple fronts. As individuals grow or their environments change, encountering conflict directly or indirectly becomes a norm. We see conflicts play out within our family life, our work environments, and even our professional association. Unfortunately, very few people would say that they actually like conflict or feel comfortable trying to manage conflict. When they do not have the right set of tools to engage in conflict effectively, individuals often react in a way that can be more damaging to long-term relationships with lasting hurt and hard feelings. In many cases, we avoid or shy away from the conflict and hope that it will resolve itself or be overtaken by some other crisis or conflict. Unfortunately, resentment and frustration can still be building and lead to micro-aggressions or passive-aggressive behavior patterns. Alternately, we engage from a position of frustration or anger and let emotion overwhelm the situation. In this case, a defensive, positional response is often triggered and may include residual hurt feelings from having made the conflict part of one's personal identity. Finally, for those in titled leadership roles, there is a tendency to fall back on the authoritarian "because I said so and I am the manager." Unfortunately, this does not actually address conflict. Rather it drives it underground and helps foster a rebellion subculture in the organization.

At the forthcoming annual conference in New Orleans, we will be having several programs directly related to Conflict Management. My President's program is titled "Addressing Conflict Through Difficult and Uncomfortable Dialogues...Why This Is Important" and will be on Saturday morning. There is also another program "Conflict Resolution for Effective Library Leadership" on Monday afternoon. Additionally, the Presenter of the President's Program, Nancy Watson, Ph.D, is also doing a full day preconference titled "Leadership and Conflict Management: Managing conflict, drama, and strategies to address the most annoying behaviors." Through having attended her Conflict Management Workshops and Mediation

Training, I credit Dr. Watson with having provided some of the most influential developmental opportunities of my 20+ year professional career and which has also improved many of my relationships outside of work as well.

Finally, as I write my last LL&M column as the President of the Library Leadership & Management Association, I found myself reflecting on the past year and the reality of what the year has been like, compared to what I expected when I stood for nomination two years ago. At the time, I had planned to focus my energies on serving LLAMA through the intermediate stages of the reorganization, when I knew excitement for the change would start to wane and some areas of the organization might be struggling to actually implement the concepts and ideals associated with the new organizational model. I also knew that I wanted to make conflict management the focus of my presidential conference programming.

Organizationally, we have continued to make progress in the restructuring. The Content Coordinating Team was created and has done a thorough assessment of our recent educational content offerings through different venues and identified which of the leadership competencies have been lacking support. We have seen the Communities of Practice work on figuring out their new leadership and succession planning structures. Unfortunately, the delays in implementation of the new ALA Connect prevented us from moving forward on revamping our communication tools and strategies for better member engagement. Additionally, things have been happening at the ALA level that have requiring “borrowing” staff resources from LLAMA in efforts to move the entire association forward. Within many of these forums, LLAMA’s restructuring has been referenced as visionary and THE model to be following.

There are many sayings, quotes, and clichés, about what happens when you make “plans” and they usually have those plans going out the window due to dramatic external factors. The current discussions about possibly combining LLAMA, LITA, and ALCTS into a new more agile and robust single division, using the lessons learned from the LLAMA restructuring, have been a huge and previously unanticipated issue for my presidential term. It has definitely taken time and resources to engage this discussion as it does represent a huge change and requires a totally different way of thinking about the roles, functions, resources, and identities associated with the impacted divisions. We expect to reach a milestone decision shortly before Annual Conference on whether to step back or proceed on this front. One of the reasons the LLAMA restructuring was successful was the commitment of several consecutive LLAMA Presidents to the fundamental ideas behind the restructuring and to commit to carrying it forward. Whether we will be able to achieve this with the other divisions is actually part of the conversation.

Finally, I want to take a moment and thank all of the members who have continued to support me and engage in the association during the past year. It has been a pleasure to serve you and hope that you have found value in your LLAMA membership through engagement with peers or participating in some of our educational opportunities. Even though it has been a somewhat turbulent year, I am optimistic that LLAMA will come through whatever realignments happen as a stronger and more vital group of professional leaders. I still have a few more duties to carry out as Past-President and Chairing the Nomination Committee after that. However, in many ways the end of my Presidential term at the end of annual conference will also represent the first step in my transition out of the profession as I am expecting to retire from the Texas A&M University Libraries in early 2020 and move in new directions for the next phase of my life. As such, I want to close by recognizing current and past members of LLAMA and ALA and the staff for many years of professional growth opportunities, support, and engagement.

Pixey Anne Mosley (pmosley@library.tamu.edu) is Associate Dean for Administrative and Faculty Services at Texas A&M University.

Published: May 2018