

Perspectives on Leadership in LLAMA

A Round Table Interview with Paul Anderson, Teri Switzer, and Nicole Cavallero

Pixey Anne Mosley



Pictured (from top): Paul Anderson, Teri Switzer, and Nicole Cavallero.

In this round table discussion, the transformation associated with the recent organizational name change is viewed through the eyes of three Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) members at different stages of their professional service careers. Paul Anderson is currently the assistant director for Library Administrative Services at the University of Delaware Library. He has been active in LLAMA since 1986 in a number of prominent leadership roles. These have included serving as the chair of the LLAMA Program Committee from 2002 to 2003, LLAMA president in 2004, and chair of the editorial advisory board from 2006 to 2008. He represents a top-level leadership perspective in LLAMA. Teri Switzer is currently the dean of the Kraemer Family Library at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. She has been active in LLAMA for many years, since joining in 1991 (or thereabouts). She represents the leading-from-the-middle perspective having served in the role of chair/chair-elect for several LLAMA groups: Budget and Finance Committee from 2007 to present, Human Resources Section from 2001 to 2004, and LOMS Financial Management Committee from 2000 to 2001. In between these appointments was a four-year role as ALA Treasurer. Nicole Cavallero represents the future potential of LLAMA. A newcomer who joined in 2007, she has already become an active LLAMA participant as a mentee in the new mentoring program after participating in the Emerging Leaders program.

Pixey Anne Mosley (pamosley@tamu.edu) is Head of Access Services, Texas A&M University Libraries, and co-associate editor for *LL&M*.

Pixey Mosley: What does the LLAMA name change to emphasize leadership mean to you?

Paul Anderson: Adding “Leadership” to our name promotes the study and practice of leadership. It seems to me that every success or failure can be attributed in large part to the corresponding success or failure of leadership. Environmental conditions, budgets, and even luck play a part in outcomes, but effective leadership makes the most of what it confronts and over time is successful. We need to emphasize this and in so doing promote greater effectiveness and success for librarians and library services.

Teri Switzer: It is apparent from LLAMA’s charge to “encourage and nurture current and future leaders and to develop and promote outstanding leadership and management practices” that the association’s primary goal focuses on leadership. By adding leadership to its name, LLAMA is sending the message that it is the go-to association for tips, tricks, and overall development of leadership—for all classifications of people in all types of libraries.

Nicole Cavallero: I am excited by the emphasis on leadership. I believe that leadership takes on many forms and may not be most often symbolized by an administration or management role within the library. The emphasis on leadership places a value on the act of leadership and the process of taking initiative rather than the achievement of a role that is strictly “management” or “administration.”

PM: What are topics or directions that you think LLAMA might want to explore in its redirection toward the broader leadership focus?

PA: I think LLAMA needs to both encourage and enable people to lead. Leadership is everyone’s responsibility so I would like to see more programs and discussions on how to lead from wherever you are in an organization. This should help build tomorrow’s leaders. At the same time, I think LLAMA programming should continue to help members build very specific application skills. One place LLAMA has done this is in the Friday afternoon workshop at the Midwinter Meeting. While this is primarily for committee chairs and officers, there has been an effort to expand the

audience to other LLAMA leaders and potential leaders. Conference programming and interest group meetings can focus on leadership skill enhancement. I recently attended an American Management Association seminar aimed at new managers that emphasized situational leadership. I am not a new manager, but being exposed to this has been very useful. Special conferences, programs, and webinars are something that could be used to address these skills and would be a value-added service to members and potential members of our association.

TS: LLAMA is as diverse as any association can be. In fact, we have members who do not work in libraries, but are associated with libraries because of their discipline and specialty. Therefore, I would like LLAMA to become a venue for communicating what library leadership is. Personally, I believe that the word leadership is among the most misunderstood words we use. Generally we think of leadership in the formal or business sense, and we don't realize that there is also an informal or less authoritative connotation. I would like LLAMA to put more effort into promoting leadership across all library workers—not only those who are leaders, administrators, or managers, but also those who have a graduate degree in library and information sciences who may not be in “leadership” roles; those who do not have a MLS but work in a library; those who may aspire to be higher in the hierarchy of the library, regardless of their degree credentials; and those who may not want to touch those higher level jobs with a ten-foot pole. Leadership is not solely about the job or the degree. It is also about one's role, and perhaps that role is as a member of a committee or task force in one's home library; community; state, regional, national, or international association, rather than in one's home-library management. For many years, LLAMA has strived to attract those people who are new to working in libraries. Not only does this need to be continued, but we should also consider reaching out to those who are not directly employed by libraries. As I mentioned above, there are others such as architects and library trustees who are members of LLAMA. These are what I call members who are outside the library building confines. However, they have realized the broader scope of leadership. I would also like to see LLAMA become the association that first comes to mind when planning a workshop that has to do with the broader concept of leadership in all types of libraries—that which includes leadership as it applies to our buildings and security, human resources, staff development, financial advancement and planning, public relations, marketing, organizational development, assessment, and technology implementation. To do this will mean expanding our continuing education offerings and revitalizing our institutes, just to name a couple. And, I would like LLAMA to continue to mentor and grow our emerging leader participants, reach out to the other emerging leader participants, and find additional ways to

get this new generation of library works involved in both LLAMA and ALA.

NC: Leadership workshops might be a great way to interest not only those in current leadership positions, but offer opportunities to those who are looking for ways to develop their leadership skills.

PM: Do you think there is anything we need to be careful not to lose in the redirection from the administration focus?

PA: I am not worried about that. I think the terms leadership and management really cover everything that would be included in the term administration. To me, leadership is a richer, more evocative word than administration. For example, to say you are administering a project sounds somewhat clinical and routine, while leading a project is more energetic. It also suggests that you are providing vision as well as direction. The word leadership is also less exclusive and position-based than the term administration so it should be more relevant to more people.

TS: Even though leadership comes before administration, one shouldn't assume that there is a redirection from the administration focus. Here is how I see it: the Library Administration & Management Association has forever been known simply as LLAMA and pronounced that way. The llama has been our mascot, so to speak. Therefore, in my opinion, simply because the association wanted to better convey to others its leadership focus, it does not mean that the pronunciation of the association needed to be changed. Hence, by adding one letter to denote leadership, we have not only better articulated what the association's focus is, but we have also done it with little change to the acronym and no change to the pronunciation of the acronym. And, we don't have to change our “mascot!” What better than a llama to represent us. Llamas are very social animals trained to lead. They are beasts of burden (don't most leaders, managers, and administrators have lots of burdens?), are curious, intelligent, and can learn tasks after few repetitions. I don't know about you, but I can relate to that. Of course, they are also known for spitting as a means to control their herd and ramming one another as a means to start a fight in order to show their dominance. Come to think of it, I know some leader types who do the same thing! Clearly, they were not members of LLAMA.

NC: I often hear at the library various ALA divisions compared by their “usefulness” and “how they relate to what we are doing here.” It may be important to note that one of the draws of a group like LLAMA is whether it helps one run their library better. While I believe focusing on general leadership will attract more members, it may be important to note that one can't lose sight of what we are all looking to lead in, library services.

PM: How has the division now called LLAMA contributed to your growth as a leader? How do you see it helping you in the future?

PA: LLAMA has given me many opportunities to learn skills and practice leadership. Certainly chairing committees and holding office has been rewarding and educational. LLAMA has provided many mentors. Coming together at conferences has always been a wonderful opportunity to discuss problems and learn from others.

TS: Until I found LLAMA, I attended ALA's Annual Conferences solely for the programs, to find out more about governance of my professional association, and to meet other librarians. I was a member of one of ALA's larger divisions and felt like a fish out of water. At that time it was impersonal, but served my immediate purpose—staff development. Luckily, I attended a conference program that made my lightbulb go on, and I wanted to be a part of the division that sponsored the program, Library Administration & Management. From that day on, I had a home within ALA. The people I met at committee meetings were mentors, whether they knew it or not. They provided me with the opportunity to see that I did not have to be a leader or an administrator to belong. As you can imagine, one thing led to another and I found myself yearning for more—both professionally and personally. Being an involved member of LLAMA has turned me into not only a leader in my career but also a leader in the academic institutions I have served, and in our association. It has given me the tools that I have needed to be successful, and it has given me a whole new set of friends and colleagues with whom I can brainstorm ideas and discuss problems. Regarding the future, I am a life-long learner. And, I know that LLAMA will always be there for me—whether it is by offering professional growth opportunities in the form of cutting-edge institutes, programs, pre-conferences; by providing an opportunity for networking that is so easy to do while serving on LLAMA committees; or by giving me the opportunity to feel self-fulfilled and to know that the work I did on a program or by serving as a mentor to someone new in the field was appreciated and needed.

NC: LLAMA has introduced me to others in leadership positions and has provided me with leadership resource tools and newsletters. I see LLAMA helping me as I grow into the library manager that I want to be and the administrator that I hope to be some day. I look at LLAMA as a way to become acquainted with the concerns and the hurdles that I face now and will face in the future as a manager at an urban library.

PM: What would be the advice you would give someone looking for leadership opportunities who is new to LLAMA or considering joining the division?

PA: Our association provides opportunities to lead and not merely to participate. You do not have to be in an administrative position in your library to be a committee chair or to be an active member of a committee. Every committee chair or officer is looking for members who are enthusiastic and willing to commit to projects. Our increasingly virtual world is making meaningful participation available to more people. LLAMA also will provide members with a wonderful opportunity to work with very accomplished and skilled leaders. This is perhaps the best way to learn any task, but it is especially effective in learning the nuanced skills so necessary to becoming an effective leader.

TS: Go for it! Don't waste any more time, join. It will be the best \$35 (or \$50 for continuing members) you will have spent in a long time. However, once you join, get involved. We need people, ideas, and energy on all of our section and division committees. While other divisions may also have a leadership component, we are the only one that is solely interested in developing those people who are interested in being one or are a leader, an administrator, or a manager—and we will do that within the context of your chosen specialty, be that human resources, cataloging, reference, instructional technology, or computer systems as well as whether you are in an academic, a public, a special, or a school library. LLAMA's programs cover this wide array of specialties and we need members from all of these areas to ensure that high quality programming is offered.

NC: Membership in LLAMA shows that one is serious about leadership and about improving oneself. I have a friend who has applied to be a manager at our library system. He was a bit embarrassed at his inability to fill up the section on the application that asked for past leadership experience. Each and every opportunity to network in LLAMA is an opportunity to gain more leadership skills and experience.

PM: What do you see as LLAMA's potential for a leadership role in the overall profession of librarianship?

PA: First let me say that leadership is actively and successfully fostered throughout the American Library Association and its divisions and round tables. I think that having a division that focuses on leadership, however, is a plus because it means that there will always be a place where programming and dialogue on this important subject is ongoing and available. I think that emphasizing leadership and management instead of administration and management will help reaffirm that everyone can be a leader. This is a powerful concept that, if embraced, will do much to promote the practice of leadership and advance services to users of all types of libraries.

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The library created a website for students who are working abroad that allows the student to quickly and easily find websites for all the libraries in all the study abroad locations as well as contact information for help services. The website also has contact information for our own library, and for most research services so the student always has access to research help from home. We are engaged in a project to organize and manage all the documents and resources available to the accreditation team as well as the visitors. We have a collection development program designed to purchase library material for new faculty who happen to be working in a research or teaching area that has never been covered in our collections. This program

fills collecting gaps in a systematic way that helps with recruiting and retention and contributes to the campus process of creating hiring packages. The library is represented on many key leadership committees, for policies on curriculum, technology, research support, and university records. We have focused on liaison with key stakeholders, and have a structured program for faculty liaison as well as a new program under development for communication with and feedback from students and the campus student life division. Finally, we are offering digital production and repository services to faculty across campus.

—**Nancy Allen**, *University of Denver Library*

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around him. He certainly has demonstrated that he is committed to having a team of strong leaders around him and to creating an environment where groupthink would not be likely to occur.

There are many other observations that we could make about leadership in this presidential election season. I

encourage you to read the articles and columns in this issue of *Library Leadership & Management*, all focused on library leadership, and then seize the opportunities that are all around us every day to learn and build our leadership skills. Leaders never stop learning.

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TS: The potential is limitless! LLAMA is for every library worker. And, these people need not aspire to become a manager, an administrator, or a leader. They need not work in one particular type of library. We are a “one-stop shop” when it comes to providing the tools and skills that are needed to take on any type of leadership role.

NC: LLAMA has the potential to become synonymous with leadership in libraries. If it is not already, LLAMA could be thought of as the place to send one's library leaders in order to help them gain more experience and learn through networking. LLAMA should be so intertwined with leadership development that all libraries encourage their management to join in order to gain development.