

LLAMA President's Message



Jeff Steely

What is the Library Leadership and Management Association all about? Why should I join? What will I get out of membership? These are all questions I've heard from librarian colleagues when I talk about our association. I find myself giving two answers: who we are now, and who I hope we will be in the future.

Today LLAMA is the division of ALA focused on leadership and management development. LLAMA is known for providing great conference programs and for relevant and high-quality for-a-fee programming, including webinars, pre-conferences, and institutes. We present some of the most prestigious awards in the profession (often accompanied by some very nice receptions!). And we are, I believe, a fun and welcoming professional association.

I do have to admit, however, that in some ways we are also a typical, well-established non-profit. We are seeing a gradual decline in our membership, and even though the New Professionals Section helps with age diversity, we are graying with the profession. If I'm perfectly honest, I also have to confess that our organization is a bit unwieldy. We have lots of sections, with lots of committees, with lots of members. The all-sections, all-committees meeting at conference feels like a crowded bazaar, and probably frightens away divisional tourists shopping for a professional home. Our sections represent various aspects of leadership and management, but we don't always do a good job of thinking holistically about what development opportunities are needed in the profession. Some groups do a great deal of work each year, but too much of that work is either reflecting on the purpose of the group or reinventing the wheel as committee membership changes. And some groups, I'm sorry to say, have trouble providing even a brief report of their activities.

I do hope, and believe, that the LLAMA of the future can be the division that delivers on its mission. As we begin talking about a new organizational structure, I hope we can reshape the division into the association information professionals look to as they aspire to lead and desire to manage effectively. This will require, in my humble opinion, a very different structure. The

literature I have been reading lately points to more focus, less complexity, and a commitment to providing value. As the LLAMA Executive Committee forms a reorganization task force and begins its work, I hope you will provide your ideas and enthusiasm toward these goals. I also hope every member will be open to bold changes.

My hope for the LLAMA of the future is that the value of membership is obvious, and that we maximize the enormous contribution of time and energy we get from our members. I think we all agree that we would rather spend less time rewriting committee charges and hunting officer nominations, and more time developing the next generation of leaders for our field.

P.S. – While LLAMA has been holding its own financially, our ability to do bold new things depends on the association's on-going financial health. As you plan your end-of-year philanthropy, please consider a gift to the LLAMA endowment. Visit <http://www.ala.org/llama/about/support> to learn how to advance the work we do together.

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Published: November 2015