

LLAMA President's Message

Lynn Hoffman



If you've been reading your LLAMA emails over the last several months, you know that we, along with our colleagues in the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) and in the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA), are considering joining forces to create an entirely new division. (If you haven't been keeping track, you can get up to speed here: <https://tinyurl.com/divalign>.)

We had a very productive joint board meeting at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans earlier this summer, where we had the chance to talk about hurdles that might arise as we explore this new possibility, as well as our dreams for where a new division could take us. And while some of the differences in culture among the three divisions emerged as part of our conversations, our shared ideas about future success were much more pronounced. Among them, several themes emerged:

- A new division will allow us to take the assets of our existing organizations and use them to help build a flexible, dynamic, responsive organization that, above all, provides meaningful participation and engagement for our members.
- If we focus on creating something wholly new, rather than trying to recreate the structures and processes that currently exist, we have the opportunity to foster a more highly engaged relationship between the organization and membership.
- Successfully creating a new division will also allow us to lead the evolution of ALA as a whole.

I believe most of us are a part of LLAMA because we think strong leadership and management in library organizations is critical to their success. We can see the possibilities in

this kind of radical change, and even in a new division that has a broader functional scope, we know that we will have ample opportunities for exploring excellence in leadership and management, providing career-spanning support, and modeling best practices in our [Foundational Competencies for Leadership and Management](#) as the new division takes shape. It's an exciting time.

The next steps will be happening quickly. Over the next several months, a steering committee made up of the Presidents, Presidents-Elect and Executive Directors of the three divisions will continue to flesh out the project plan, and will be seeking member volunteers to help draft key strategic and structural documents and communicate with members. This work will continue through the fall, with the next major decision point being a vote by the three Division Boards at the 2019 Midwinter Meeting to move forward and put the creation of a new division on the spring ballot.

It is possible that one or more divisions will decide at Midwinter or through the member vote that the risk of this course of action is too great, or that the pace of transition is too fast, or that the benefits of a new division just aren't enough to justify the change. LLAMA may decide that it is still in our best interest to move forward, providing leadership through the process. On the other hand, it is possible that LLAMA leadership and members will look at the progress we've made since our own reorganization and decide that participating in this project will lessen our ability to flexibly respond to member needs to too great an extent to make it worthwhile. I don't think that's where we are at the moment, but part of successful leadership is continuing to be open to new information and being willing to change a course of action.

When I put my name forward for nomination for office, I had no idea my tenure as LLAMA President would be so jam-packed with activity, but it absolutely fits with the kind of person I am. I am energized and optimistic about the idea of a new division, and about the process that will lead to its creation. My personal experience with and interest in the areas of project and change management will be well-exercised as a member of the steering committee, and I hope to apply what I've learned as a leader in making this project successful. I invite you to participate as well.

- Join the community on [ALA Connect](#) to keep track of progress, to provide your feedback, and to take part in discussions.
- Consider volunteering your time and skills as a member of a working group or team. Calls for volunteers will be coming out over the next several months; you can also contact any member of the LLAMA Board or staff to express your interest.

Stay tuned!

Lynn Hoffman (lhoffman@sclibnj.org) is Director of Operations, Somerset County Library System of New Jersey

Published: August 2018