

## LLAMA President's Message

Lynn Hoffman



One of the most exciting things that can happen to you as a supervisor and manager is to see a former employee grow and develop, successfully moving into the kind of leadership role you always knew they were capable of holding. I've had the delight of this experience a couple of times in the last year. It isn't that I take any particular credit for their success – they would have been successful whether I had been their supervisor or not – but to have been a part of their journey is highly fulfilling. Each time it happens, I like to think I've helped to make our profession stronger in some small way.

A recent such experience has got me thinking about leadership development and career paths, and brings to mind one of LLAMA's fantastic discussion groups, Dialog With Directors. This group is very careful to say that it's Dialog *With* Directors, not *among* directors or *for* directors – anyone who is facing the kinds of challenges in their organization that are common among managers and administrators is welcome to attend, learn and contribute. Still, I suspect there are many supervisors, middle managers, and staff who are not yet in management positions but who want to be, who look at the name of the discussion group and assume it isn't for them. (For the record, it is for you!)

This seems to be a relatively common assumption, that if you want to be a library leader, the pinnacle of your career path is going to be Director (or Dean, or whatever that high-level end point might be). I sometimes wonder how many people turn away from a career path in management because they assume that end point is inevitable and know they don't want to end up there, or who reluctantly take on directorship because they think they should, even though their skills and strengths may make them better suited to a different kind of leadership role.

I bring this up because while I think a former staff member who recently made an exciting career move has the capacity and talent to be an excellent library director down the road, I have no idea whether or not she wants to be a library director. Her current role at the deputy director level might be a stepping stone to directorship, but it doesn't have to be. For my own part, the deputy role is the kind

of organizational leadership position that fits my strengths, and I'd like to think I'm really good at it. Even so, when colleagues ask me, "Why aren't you a director yet?" I can't help but feel a little like they see me as a permanent understudy without the strength or courage to step into the "starring" role.

Coming to the end of my year as LLAMA President, I am tremendously gratified by having been able to lead a national professional organization without having had to be a director. It reaffirms my decision to work at the level that makes the best use of my skills, with the recognition that although I don't have a director title, I am a legitimate library leader and manager, and I have the ability to make an substantial impact. I love that LLAMA is open and welcoming to members at all points in their career paths, and that we strive to create a community of learning across roles, library types, tenure and experience. I hope my contributions as President will continue to support that intention, regardless of what the future holds.

If you will be attending this year's ALA Annual Conference in Washington D.C. June 20-25, I'd like to invite you to participate in whatever discussion groups are of interest to you, regardless of your current role, and to attend other LLAMA events, such as the LLAMA President's Program. This year's program will address one of the more difficult management challenges related to equity, diversity, and inclusion issues: how to respond to an incident of harassment or bias in way that doesn't make things even worse for those involved and for your organization at large. Having personally experienced a number of such incidents where a manager or administrator perhaps didn't take appropriate, unambiguous action or make the most effective communication choices, it's clear this is not a skill many of us come by naturally. I look forward to learning more about approaches and strategies that build trust and development, rather than cause hurt feelings and disunity. This program will be held Saturday, June 22 10:30 am-12:00 pm; you can find the location along with other LLAMA program and event listings in the conference Scheduler.

See you in Washington!

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