

In my first column, I mentioned that the LITA board's main objective is "to oversee the affairs of the division during the period between meetings." Of course, oversight requires communication. Sometimes this is among board members, or it's an e-mail update, or a post to the LITA-L discussion list, or even the articles in this journal. Regardless, I see the cornerstone of "between-meeting oversight" as keeping the membership fully (or even partially) engaged from January through June and July through December.

As a *mea culpa* for the board, but without placing the blame on any one individual, I am willing to concede that the board has not done an adequate job of engaging the membership between American Library Association (ALA) meetings. While ALA itself is addressing this problem with recommendations for virtual participation and online collaboration, LITA should be at the forefront of setting the benchmark for virtual communication, participation, education, planning, and membership development.

In an attempt to posit some solutions, as opposed to finding someone to blame, I first thought of the LITA committees. Which one should be responsible for communicating LITA opportunities and events to the membership using twenty-first-century technology? Education? Membership? Web Coordinating? Program Planning? Publications? In the end, I was left with the choice of two evils: merge all the committees into one so that they can do everything or create a new committee to deal with the perceived problem.

Knowing that neither of those solutions will suffice, I'd like to put the onus back on the membership. Maybe I'm trying to be a 2.0 librarian—crowdsourcing the problem, that is, taking the task that might have been done by an individual or committee and asking for more of a community-driven solution. In the past, LITA focused on the necessary technologies for crowdsourcing—discussion lists, blogs, and wikis—as if the technology alone could solve the problem. The BIGWIG Taskforce and Web Coordinating Committee have shouldered the burden of both implementing the technology and gaining philosophical consensus on its use—a daunting task that can easily appear chaotic. Now that the technology is commoditized (and generally embraced by ALA at large and other divisions as well), perhaps it is time to embrace the philosophy of crowdsourcing.

Maybe it's just because I have had cloud computing and web-scale architectures on the brain too much lately (having decided that it is impossible to serve two masters—job and volunteer work—I shall forever endeavor to find the overlap between the two), but I sincerely believe that repeating the mantra that LITA's strength is its membership is not mere rhetorical lipservice. eBay is better for sellers because there are so many buyers; it is better for buyers because there are so many sellers. GoogleDocs works for sharing documents better than a corporate wiki or Microsoft Sharepoint because it breaks down the barriers of domains, allowing the participants to determine who shares responsibility for producing something. BarCamps are rising in popularity not only because of a content focus on open data, open source, and open access, but because of the participatory and user-generated style of the BarCamp-style meetings.

As a division of ALA, LITA has two challenges—leading the efforts of educating the membership, other divisions, and ALA about impending sea changes in information technology, but also embracing these technologies itself. We must eat our own dog food, as the saying goes. Perhaps it is more fitting to suggest that LITA must not only focus on *getting* technology to work, but *putting* technology to work.

In the next few months, the LITA board will be tackling LITA's strategic plan, which expires in 2008. That means it is time not only to review the strategy—to educate, to serve, to reach out—but also to assess the tactics employed to fulfill that strategy. You are probably reading this column in or after the month in which the strategic plan ends, which does not mean that we will be coasting into the ALA Midwinter Meeting. On the contrary, I sincerely hope to gather enough information from committees, task forces, members, and nonmembers in order for the LITA leadership to come up with something strategically meaningful going into the next decade.

One year isn't nearly long enough to see something this big through to completion. Just as national politicians begin reelection campaigns as soon as they are elected, I suspect that ALA divisional presidents begin thinking about their legacy within the first couple months of office, if not before. But I hope, at least, to establish some groundwork, including a platform strategy that will allow the membership to maintain a connection with the board and with other members—to crowdsource solutions on a scale that has not been attempted in the past and that will solidify our future. And when we have a plan, you can trust that we will use all the available methods at our disposal to promote it and solicit your feedback.

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