

President's Message

Transforming Leadership

by Leslie Burger

"Leaders grow, they are not made."

*Peter F. Drucker, from the foreword to *The Leader of the Future*, 1996*

As I write this month's column, volunteers are busy sorting through the more than 340 applications that have been received for the first Emerging Leaders program, which will launch in January during ALA's Midwinter Meeting in Seattle (*AL*, Oct., p. 4–5). When this idea was formed, the committee knew that there was a need for training new leaders but were unprepared for the heavy response level for what will only be 100 slots. Young, new librarians from 44 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and Egypt have told us why they should be selected to become ALA's next generation of leaders. I am humbled by the response and eager to see them in action.

This project comes at an interesting time for our profession. We are busy thinking about the ways that we should educate 21st-century librarians both in formal MLIS curricula and through our various certification programs. We are seeking ways to recruit a more diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve and are searching for people who can assume the positions of longtime professional leaders. The challenges faced in libraries today are changing at a rapid pace and require an agile workforce of problem-solvers, team players, leaders, and articulate spokespeople.

The first wave of baby-boomers turns 60 this year—an age at which retirement is no longer a distant promise for the future, but an imminent event. Many of my fellow colleagues opted out long before mandatory retirement, while others are continuing to work and choosing to remain engaged in the profession. So many who are coming behind us are having their opportunity to begin or advance their professional careers postponed. When we leave—and yes, we will eventually leave our jobs—we will take



Cie Shroud

years of accumulated knowledge and also set the stage for what will be the next wave of library leaders.

So where does ALA fit into all of this? The Association traditionally offers professional development opportunities through its programs and committee assignments that allow members to learn leadership

skills in a real-time context. Based on the response to the Emerging Leaders program, it's clear to me that our members are hungry for more. ALA has a key role to play in developing formal and informal professional leadership opportunities throughout all the stages of our careers. I like to think of it as situational leadership training—wherever you may be in your career, ALA will have a leadership program that enables you to move to the next step.

I'm working closely with ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels to institutionalize the Emerging Leaders program so that it can become an annual event. We are seeking funding to develop a mid-career leadership training program to prepare and give members the needed confidence to assume managerial and leadership positions in their own institutions. And finally, for those of us ready to go off to our next adventure, I would like to see training that enables us to lead during the transition in both our organizational and personal lives.

Throughout my career, I have been the beneficiary of a variety of leadership programs, sometimes as a participant or a planner and occasionally as a critic. What I've learned is that participation in these programs enhanced my library school education in ways that have been invaluable throughout my career. Leadership training is an investment that provides dividends for a lifetime. ☑

ALA President LESLIE BURGER is director of the Princeton (N.J.) Public Library; lburger@princetonlibrary.org.