

# LearningExchange

September 2010

“School ends, but education doesn’t.”

Volume 27, Number 1



## The Learning RT Wants You!

Be involved in a national ALA group. Network with professional trainers and CE providers. Find new resources and venues for learning. You can get involved a little or a lot. Join us in our work! Below are options.

**Meetings** – Join our meetings. We have monthly meetings online via ALA software and meetings at ALA midwinter and annual. These meetings provide an opportunity for members to stay informed about Learning RT activities and find ways of getting more involved. Our meetings are open to all members and information about the meeting date, time, and access are sent via the [learnrt@ala.org](mailto:learnrt@ala.org) listserv.

**Communications** – The Learning Round Table has a variety of communications including a blog (for training ideas & tips), a wiki (for training materials and resources), and a quarterly newsletter (for articles on training). We welcome people

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## Anatomy of a Staff Retreat

by Dawn Lowe-Wincentsen

Every library I have worked at has had some form of staff retreat. There was the department retreat at one library where we would be divided into groups, and each group would work on a topic such as staff development, or outreach. There was the department retreat where the entire department would don bathing suits and enjoy the outdoors while planning events and activities for the upcoming year. There was the department heads retreats for the big organizational change planning. And lately I have been involved in the whole library retreat where everyone meets off site and discusses a variety of topics, has trainings, and brainstorms.

Even though all these retreats are a bit different they have some common elements. Use these as a guide to develop your own staff retreats.

First common element is the purpose. Why are we having this event? In every circumstance listed above there was some form of brainstorming and planning involved. Some involved planning on the grand scheme such as a retreat to discuss building modifications at a potential new location, or to reorganize the organization to provide more efficient services. Some brainstorming was done on a less grand scale such as brainstorming new instruction outcomes for a class, or ways to improve a program that is already in place. No matter what you want people to be thinking about, pick the topics ahead of time to give them time to think about it before the retreat. This should eliminate those cricket chirp inducing silences while people contemplate. Speaking of brainstorming, it is an important part of

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## New ideas to share?

Send your articles to the editors at

[editor@alallearning.org](mailto:editor@alallearning.org)

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# Learning Round Table: Your Place for CE

## President's Message from Sharon Morris

What an exciting year we have planned for the Learning Round Table!

In recent years we have:

- re-organized the board to formalize committees
- added monthly online board meetings
- re-branded with a new name (NOT an acronym) and logo – Thank you Lori Reed!
- reorganized our communications including a new blog and wiki
- partnered with other ALA groups including the Emerging Leaders program, PLA conference presence and joint happy hour with LITA.

This year, we want to continue this work and grow our round table membership and activities. One way is to get more members involved. The Learning RT welcomes all members to contribute to making our national efforts for library staff development as great as they can be.

### Membership

Your Learning Round Table membership gives you access to a plethora of resources with a monetary value which far exceeds your membership fee.

1. We partner with the American Management Association (AMA) which qualifies our members for a Preferred Professional Membership in AMA (valued at \$150!). This membership includes discounts on AMA seminars, materials, and unlimited access to the AMA's members-only website containing an ever-growing library of timely and timeless issues related to professional development and management.
2. We are offering continuing education opportunities for our members. Last year, we sponsored one of our members, Jennifer Spriggs, as an ALA Emerging Leader. This year, we will sponsor two of our members for the ALA Emerging Leaders program.
3. In the past, we have provided scholarships for members to attend non-library continuing education conferences. We have asked a subcommittee to look into re-instituting this scholarship within the next year. Stay tune for updates on this exciting

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scholarship program.

4. We provide online and print access to a wealth of continuing education and staff development tools. Our newsletter, blog, and wiki are all resources for our members to share their great work as well as learn from others.
5. We offer fabulous programs at conferences including keynotes, workshops, and our ever-popular training showcase. These conference activities offer members ways to formally and informally learn about staff training resources, tools and techniques.
6. We welcome our members to be involved on committees and the activities of the Learning Round Table.

Members need to sign up for the [learnrt@ala.org](mailto:learnrt@ala.org) listserv to get updates on meetings, events, resources, and opportunities to be involved. Directions for signing up for this listserv are at: <http://lists.ala.org/sympa/info/learnrt>

### Communications

We have formed a Communications Committee which is chaired by Lori Reed and includes board and other members working on the newsletter, blog, and wiki among other things. This group oversees:

1. ALA Connect offers all members sign in privileges to access communications and resources in this area. Here we keep our calendar with meetings and events and upload news about members.
2. <http://www.alalearning.org> This is the Learning Round Table web presence with blog entries for several of our members. If you are interested in being a blogger to share your ideas and expertise on training library staff, please visit the site and contact me or Lori Reed.
3. Our quarterly newsletter, the Learning Exchange, offers articles and features on current topics related to training, program ideas, and learning tools for library staff development. An online library of previous newsletter issues is at: (<http://>

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# Richard Mott

## Member Profile



Richard is the Training Manager at the Jacksonville Public Library in Jacksonville, FL. He has been there for the past five years. He recently sat down to answer some questions for us.

### **Describe Your Typical Work Assignments:**

Develop and deliver training programs; plan and execute an annual Staff Day extravaganza; identify staff learning needs and ensure that appropriate avenues are available to fulfill them; gradually developing a competency-based training curriculum for all staff; direct the development of e-learning modules; promote relevant learning opportunities to staff; coordinate destination:LEADERSHIP, JPL's "transform your organizational culture" program.

### **What Was Your Most Interesting Library-related Job Before Your Present Position and Why?**

My most interesting library-related job prior to this one was reference librarian at a small neighborhood branch in Jacksonville. It was the most interesting because, well, it was my only other library-related job, but it was a great way to start off in the profession because I got to wear so many hats: adult programming coordinator, acquisitions

clerk, shelver, circulation clerk, part-timer supervisor, janitor, children's program assistant, and, oh yeah, reference librarian.

### **What Is Your Favorite Thing To Do When You Attend Library Conferences?**

My favorite thing to do is glom onto anybody I can find who is involved in staff training and drain them of every bit of insight, advice, and ideas I can possibly learn.

### **What Is The Most Helpful Training Resource That You Use on A Regular Basis?**

Here's what I hope everybody will say in answer to this question by this time next year: "Why, the Learning Round Table's Library Learning Wiki, of course. It is hands down the best place to find materials, outlines, and advice for developing classes, guidance for developing a solid training curriculum, suggestions for cool and helpful free software and web resources, not to mention the best place to ask questions and exchange ideas on the thorny problems and issues that fill the world of library staff learning."

### **What Is The Biggest Training Disaster You Have Ever Experienced? And What Did You Learn From It?**

You had to ask. My biggest training disaster was Staff Development Day 2009. My committee worked their behinds off to make it a fantastic day for staff and most aspects of the day went beautifully. We had the auditorium walls filled with banners from each branch or library unit, each proclaiming "Champions of ..." something. We had the incoming president of PLA to deliver the keynote address. We provided over 20 different breakout sessions for staff to choose from. We showed a funny video depicting a relay race between two acquisitions teams who each took a book through the entire materials processing routine, climaxing in a victory to the theme from Rocky. We had a wonderful Continental breakfast. So many things went beautifully. The problem was the opening session went way over time and one speaker, in particular, bored the staff to the point of torture. At

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to write materials for one of these venues and/or to help find content and facilitate the online and print presence of the Learning RT.

**Membership** – We would like members to find so much value in the Learning RT that they promote membership to others. The membership committee connects with members around benefits, activities, and retention. The committee also recruits more members in fun and engaging ways.

**Programs** – The Learning RT offers informal and formal programs at ALA midwinter and annual. The programs committee coordinates these events including planning, marketing, and logistics. Additionally, we have a committee just to work on the training showcase which is an exciting training event at ALA. We have also recently expanded our reach to the PLA conference as well as webinars. The Program committee coordinates those efforts as well.

**Emerging Leaders** – We sponsor emerging leaders and have projects that emerging leaders work on. Our committee works on the logistics for the emerging leaders projects, serves as liaisons to the Board, and mentors those working on projects.

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[www.ala.org/ala/clenert/newsletter/newsletter.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/clenert/newsletter/newsletter.cfm)). Our fabulous editors Dawn Lowe-Wincentsen & Kimberly Chapman are reviewing the newsletter goals and planning changes to format and content. Look for a survey in your email soon! 4. We have started a new wiki. Details of that wiki will be forthcoming and include other opportunities for members to post content as well as access training resources from others.

Please take the time to visit the learning Round Table resources and let me know if you would like to contribute or be on the Communications Committee

### **Being More Involved**

Over the next few months, I will be sending members details of the various opportunities to become  
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**Task forces** – At times, we launch a task force to explore an issue and make recommendations to the board. For example, currently we have a task force reviewing options for offering a scholarship for members to attend non-library training conferences. They are looking into the logistics and will recommend a process for scholarship distribution. As task forces form around issues (typically at our monthly online meetings or at ALA meetings), we look for people who are excited about the topic to be involved in researching, strategizing, and developing recommendations for the board.

Other activities include serving as liaison to other ALA associations, divisions, and round tables working on round table documents such as bylaws and our manual serving on the board. We have elections each year for two year terms that allow members to contribute even more to our round table.

Please contact me if you would like more information about these and other Learning Round Table activities. We look forward to your contributions.

Sharon Morris  
Learning Round Table President  
[Morris\\_s@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Morris_s@cde.state.co.us)

more involved. One quick way to contribute to the Learning Round Table now is to tell your colleagues about us and encourage them to join. The benefits of membership are many.

Please let me know if you have ideas, suggestions, or want to serve on a committee. [Morris\\_s@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Morris_s@cde.state.co.us)

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font on a dark blue rectangular background.

Become a fan of  
LearnRT on Facebook  
<http://tinyurl.com/LearnRT>

### *Anatomy, continued from page 1*

any retreat to give rules of brainstorming. These should include:

- All ideas are welcome, no idea is a dumb idea, and no one will be teased, fired or otherwise punished for stating an idea.
- Stay on topic. If you are talking about planning a staff development day, then it is not the time to bring up the newest software for web development.
- Follow through is essential. Once the ideas are out there create action items and assign them to people who will be accountable for that idea once the retreat is done.

The second common element is that every retreat is held outside of the normal surroundings. It may be a different building in the same location, or you may have the availability to go off site, but it is important to get away from the everyday surroundings and distractions to clear people's minds and allow them to concentrate on the task at hand. Some suggestions are:

- Civic buildings – depending on the size of the group some civic buildings will have conference rooms you can rent or borrow for free.
- College campuses – not everyone is near a college campus, but if you are maybe you can borrow a classroom or a meeting room that would come with whiteboards, flip charts etc.
- Hotels and convention centers – many hotels have meeting rooms you can rent. This might be a bit more expensive than the other options, but they

will have more services available to you such as AV help and possible food service. You can also rent out single rooms in some convention centers if you live near a city that has one.

- Public parks - Some parks will have meeting rooms you can use, but most will have some sort of covered area you can meet in. Be prepared to bring all your own supplies, and have a backup plan for bad weather.

The third common element is that each retreat was inclusive of all people involved. Make sure to schedule the event enough in advance that everyone knows not to take the day off that day. If it is possible to close the department or library that is great, if it is not possible see if you can find someone who can staff it while you are at the retreat. This will make sure that no one feels left out because they had to work.

There is not a fourth common element to all retreats. Some other things that would give a added bonus to your event would be offering food, snacks or lunch for an all day event. If you can it is helpful to bring in a person to facilitate. There are people who are trained facilitators that you can hire, or if you know of someone in your area that can come in to help. Another possibility is to have training part of the day and brainstorming the other part. This helps to break up the day a bit. No matter what the situation or the topics discussed, a retreat is a great way to energize, get everyone involved, and work together towards a common goal.

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the end of the day, sadly, that's what stood out in most people's minds.

I learned two very important lessons from the experience: #1) Trust, and stand up for, your instincts. When I heard this woman's pitch to persuade us to hire her, I felt that her message was just way too esoteric for our audience; however, following my typical collaborative management style, I listened to the feedback from the rest of my team (plus one assistant director). They surprised me by saying they were on board for hiring her. They liked her message. I caved. I will continue to allow myself to be over-ruled when a committee membership consensus disagrees with me, but if I feel strongly about something important, I will fight a lot harder to persuade the rest.

#2) I will enforce stricter time limits on speakers, personally making clear the limits in advance, and

then taking responsibility for sticking to the speaking schedule during the event.

### **What Training Idea Do You Want To Share With LearnRT Members?**

Sandra Smith and Betha Gutsche used this technique effectively in their excellent ALA Conference program on Developing Competencies. I really liked it so I tried it myself and found it a great way to do periodic quick polls of the learners. They gave everyone a yellow letter-size piece of card stock paper. One side had a happy smiling face on it with "Yes" written on it; the other had a sad face with the words "Not so much". When you ask an appropriate question, the learners hold up whichever side best expresses their sentiments. One reason I like it a lot better than hand-raising because I never know how many people who don't raise their hand are answering "No" and how many are simply abstaining.

# ALA Wrap and 2010-11

by Sharon Morris

*What a great ALA!*

## ALA by the numbers:

24 people attended the fabulous pre-conference, Beyond F2F with Jay

Turner, Maurice Coleman, and Mary Beth Facioli.

47 people attended Building with Competencies  
Betha Gutsche and Sandra Smith

58 people attended Trainers as Leaders facilitated by Paul Signorelli with panelists Maurice Coleman, Sandra Smith, and Louise Whitaker.

125 came to our Training Showcase which included displays from our two emerging leader programs.

45 attended the Staff Development Discussion And Janie Hermann did a fabulous job hosting Battle Decks and gave us recognition as a sponsor.

Our two emerging leader projects were fabulous! Thanks to the emerging leaders who worked on the webinar and staff development day projects. We will continue both activities based on those recommendations in 2010-11. We will also sponsor two new emerging leaders in 2011.

**Welcome to the new board!** (July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011)

Sharon Morris, President

Sandra Smith, VP/Pres Elect (Membership Committee chair)

Pat Carterette. Past Pres (Emerging Leaders, Programs Committee chair)

Stacey Schrank, Secretary

Melissa Lattanzi, Treasurer

Janie Hermann (Conference Planning liaison, Training Showcase)

Christopher Korenowsky (Webinars, Emerging Leaders)

Richard Mott (Communications, wiki)

Lori Reed (Communications committee)

Jay Turner (Communications, wiki)

Louise Whitaker (Training showcase)

## Other Learning RT stars:

Kimberly Chapman (Learning Exchange Newsletter Editor)

Dawn M. Lowe-Wincentsen (Learning Exchange Newsletter Editor)

Cheryl Rogers (Parliamentarian)

Cal Shepard (Committee on Education Liaison)

Diane M Kauppi, (Literacy Assembly Liaison)

The Learning Exchange welcomes all members to attend monthly online meetings on the 3rd Wednesday of every month.

Please mark your calendar and join us!

September 15, October 20, November 1, December 15, 1 pm eastern, 12 central, 11 am mountain, 10 am pacific for one hour.



## Another Learning Roundtable Member Benefit!



All LearnRT members are entitled to AMA “member only” benefits including:

- Exclusive discounts and special offers
- Preferred pricing on all AMA seminars
- Unlimited access to members-only website
- 50% discount on seminar “last-minute seats”
- Access to Special track on HR and Training issues
- Access and benefit from case studies
- Use of interactive self assessments

The Public AMA Website is at <http://www.amanet.org>.

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