

## Inside LRA (4): Volunteer Leadership June/July 2010

In this fourth installment of “Inside LRA” I address an issue that has been raised particularly by newer members: How do I become more involved in the leadership of LRA? Comments at town meetings in recent years suggest, too, that some members are frustrated, because, despite frequently volunteering for service, they have not been selected (e.g., for a committee appointment).

The starting point for addressing this issue is to consider one way that LRA is unique. Few other professional organizations could match the percentage of members who have a strong, long-term commitment to the organization. For most members, LRA is their primary professional organization. Thus, there is a relatively large pool of dedicated and capable members willing to serve LRA, and, by comparison, relatively few positions of leadership within the organization.

Nonetheless, as in most scholarly organizations, moving into a leadership position typically is enabled by the following: visibility (high-quality scholarship and notable involvement in the organization), demonstration of interest in and capability for leadership, and proven service moving from lower to higher levels of leadership. Simply declaring that one is available for service is rarely enough to become deeply involved in any organization, and even less so in LRA given the many members interested in serving.

There are many available models for how members have moved through levels of LRA involvement and into leadership positions during their careers. One source is the statements offered by candidates who are running for election each year. These statements are published annually in the Spring newsletter (recent newsletters are available on the Associations Website). Each candidate presents her or his scholarly accomplishments and details involvement in various LRA activities that demonstrate commitment and proven leadership and that establish qualifications for LRA’s highest offices. Another possibility is to respond to calls for help or for volunteers that are sent via e-mail to the LRA membership. You may not be selected, but volunteering increases visibility. You might also introduce yourself to board members, indicating a willingness to serve. Additional specific ideas and strategies for initiating involvement can be found in Kathy Hinchman’s Past-President’s column in the Spring 2010 newsletter.

I can assure the membership that the current LRA leadership consciously and conscientiously considers how to nurture future leaders in the organization. For example, we continually seek to balance our need for continuity and proven leadership in the organization, which is enhanced when appointments are made for longer periods by well-established members, and our commitment to wider involvement, which is enhanced when positions and appointments turn over relatively quickly and provide opportunities for involvement among newer members. We are also guided by a commitment to nurture the involvement of more people of color in LRA’s activities and leadership as evidenced by the S.T.A.R. mentoring program. Such issues and commitments aside, I can say with

confidence that involvement in LRA leadership is open to any member who wishes to become more involved.

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