

FROM THE EDITOR

MARY DANIELS



First of all, I want to thank the Board of the Florida Library Association for accepting my application to be the full-time Editor-in-Chief of Florida Libraries. This is such an honor, and I am looking forward to continuing the tradition of excellence left by those who went before me. I'm so appreciative for the chance to work with our fantastic Editorial Board, the leaders of FLA, and library workers across the state.

This issue has an unintentional current running through it—that of support. Librarians and library workers have faced unparalleled challenges in the last few years—I don't need to cite articles or provide links to tell you that. Many of you are living these experiences. And while we read lots about book bans, Boards and governments not supporting their library workers, misuse of Artificial Intelligence, and the myriad of other difficulties facing Florida libraries, I hope this issue will be a bright spot in your reading time, shining a little hope and encouragement across your screens.

Incoming FLA President, Jorge E. Perez, wrote an amazingly uplifting piece for this issue detailing the time he spent in Washington, D.C. at the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) meeting where he met viral librarian sensation, Mychal Threets. If you're unfamiliar with Mychal, he went viral on social media over the past year by sharing stories of Library Joy, and is (at time of press) partnering with PBS for new library and literacy-themed programming. Nancy Fredericks from University of South Florida wrote a comprehensive guide for library workers about staying well—physically, mentally, and financially—during turbulent times. There are two articles in this issue with suggestions on how libraries can embrace the use of Artificial Intelligence rather than shying away from it. And I had the honor of speaking with former American Library Association President, Patricia Glass Schuman, about the challenges she faced in the 1990's and the importance of ongoing advocacy.

The impression that stuck out to me when compiling this issue was that despite the turbulence we are facing in our field, there are so many people who support their libraries, who love their librarians, and who experience that Library Joy. We have supporters not only in our field, but in other professions and organizations, too. Now is the time to reach out, build bridges, and reciprocate that support with each other and those outside the library field, too. Speak up. Get involved. Advocate for us and encourage others to do the same!

Not sure where to start? There are some great tips throughout this issue, but as May approaches, the best suggestion I can offer is to attend the FLA Conference in Orlando if you are able. Conference is an invaluable opportunity to connect, make partnerships, and learn more about libraries throughout the state (and most importantly, the people who work there). If you can't make it to the Conference, don't worry—we are planning a special Conference Recap issue of Florida Libraries for this summer.

In short: times are tough but so are we! We have shown over and over again that we cannot be knocked down, and that no one will be able to take away our Library Joy. If you see me at Conference, stop by and say hello!

Best,

MARY DANIELS, MLIS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CELEBRATING LIBRARIANS

Librarians Care for their Professional Associations

As I reflect on my more than twenty years in the profession, Florida Library Association (FLA) was the initial professional organization instrumental in my career growth, offering the spaces for countless opportunities. In 2006, I attended my first FLA conference as a timid, awkward new college librarian at SPC. By the end of the conference, I felt I had found my people.

Through FLA, I chaired and collaborated on several committees, experienced library legislation day, became a regional director, and even nurtured my creative side by becoming a past conference logo designer and bookmark contest winner. FLA has afforded me collaborations with fellow state colleagues and connected me to extraordinary mentors. In fact, FLA conferences were the venues that allowed me to present my first library poster, lightning round, and solo conference presentation. Being a librarian is an awesome job. I am amazed at all the work that FLA communities are doing currently, and together with all of you, I would like to be an instrumental piece in keeping this excellent work moving forward. I know that we have the power and focus to continue FLA's mission.

My gratitude for FLA and its mission to uphold our values at this moment in time are the reasons I opted to run for office. I am going to do something radical; I will accept what is and make a mindful choice to celebrate our profession. Looking back at our past conference themes, the majority focus has been on serving our communities or how we can do better to serve others. This year is our year. We are celebrating us. Our profession. Ourselves. We are telling our story.

Call To Action:

1. Revisit the foundations of our profession. Let's not get lost in the noise. Staying grounded in our professional ethics and values is crucial, especially during challenging times. When the world around us seems chaotic or uncertain, it's essential to maintain our strong moral compass to guide our actions and decisions. Revisiting the foundations of our profession can provide us with clarity, purpose, and direction to move forward in a healthy way.

2. Reflect on our Successes. Reflection is usually something that we skip over or rarely mindfully integrate into our daily lives. Have a conversation with a colleague about tough topics and experiences. Journal. Create a list of projects and techniques that have been successful. Reflect on what has worked on yourself for self-affirmation. These practices create distance from negativity and assist in bringing out the "best you" in any situation.

3. Tell Your Story. Unfortunately, many do not fully understand the breadth of responsibilities that librarians undertake or the educational background required to enter the profession. We know that we play a vital role in society, far beyond simply organizing books, and we have a calling to make folks aware of this. During library events, presentations and orientations, let's highlight what we do. Share your story. What made you go into librarianship? Share the why of what you do to enlighten elected officials and community members.

4. Become Involved. Getting involved in professional library organizations can take many forms, from attending conferences and workshops to volunteering on committees, contributing to publications, or participating in advocacy efforts. By actively engaging with your professional community, you can stay informed, expand your network, and contribute to advancing the library profession. Please consider becoming more proactive with FLA.

5. Mentor and Build Relationships. We all have something to offer others from our experience, regardless of the length of our career. Seasoned librarians can partner with recent graduates to provide mutual fresh perspectives, insights into emerging trends, and opportunities for learning and growth for both parties. Reach out to a new hire. Create an internal program that fosters connection and growth. Building a strong support network strengthens the fabric of our professional community and creates a sense of belonging for our colleagues.

References

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