

FROM THE PRESIDENT

DOUGLAS CRANE



As my term as President of the Florida Library Association comes to an end, I am taking time to look back on the past year. Being the Association President provides a unique vantage point from which to view the entire organization. Along with it goes the responsibility to take special care to leave FLA better off than when I entered the position. I can say that I gave the Presidency plenty of time and attention to help us move forward and address the unique challenges facing libraries in this time.

On the down side, certain political groups have continued to cast libraries and library workers in a negative light. This has been most clearly demonstrated in the attacks on the American Library Association and its current President, Emily Drabinski. Unfortunately, FLA is involved in this conflict through our status as a State Chapter. To combat this threat, FLA has been working with ALA to be active on several fronts.

In Tallahassee, the FLA Advocacy Committee, the Board of Directors, and our lobby team of Robert Stuart and Katie Flury from GrayRobinson worked to advocate for the organization and library funding, both in the Governor's office and the Legislature. Thankfully, this past legislative session saw no library or book-targeted bills. In both my visits to the Capitol, including for our successful Advocacy Day, I found no interest amongst Senators or Representatives to limit libraries. In fact, we saw another year of funding for new library construction grants.

Professionally, FLA has been very active to educate our members and equip them with the tools they need to support the profession. Our Intellectual Freedom and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) committees were active in providing resources and keeping our membership informed on current issues. Our upcoming conference will feature several breakout sessions designed to train and enlighten our conference-goers on these issues.

On a positive front, FLA was busy with new endeavors. On the fundraising side, the Communications Committee laid the groundwork to open our very first online merchandise store. The Professional Development Committee put together an excellent webinar to inform participants on how to get the most out of any conference they attend. The membership team worked hard to reach out to our members, inviting them to renew and make the most of their investment in FLA. The committees for Awards and Honors and Conference Planning are both in the home stretch of their work, which will bear fruit in Orlando at the annual conference.

Thank you to the entire Board of Directors for their stellar participation in monthly meetings. All year, the Board was able to quickly address issues in a collaborative manner that ensured a wide-ranging, respectful conversation.

FLA could not function with the day-to-day efforts of its small but mighty staff. Executive Director Jenny Abdelnour ensured that the office ran smoothly and handled all surprises along the way. Niall Williams, our new part-timer, dove right in to help with Legislative Day. As well, a big thanks to Jeanice Caskey, our contracted Conference Planner, who is working her magic to ensure everyone has a great conference.

Please enjoy this issue of Florida Libraries. Thank you to our editor Mary Daniels and all the contributors for taking the time to put this together. I look forward to seeing everyone at the Annual Conference in Orlando.

Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Crane'.

DOUGLAS CRANE

FLA PRESIDENT 2023-2024