

# From the President

In July 2024, the NCLA Finance Committee completed its work reconciling the 2023 conference budget. Although the conference took place in October 2023, the task of sorting through revenues and expenses extended well beyond the end of any conference. A great deal of time and planning goes into organizing the NCLA biennial conferences with the effort being led by members of the Conference Planning Committee, which is chaired by the current vice president. The planning process for the 65th Biennial Conference was particularly challenging as this marked the first truly in-person conference held post Covid. There was a high level of uncertainty about whether people would feel comfortable attending a large in-person event, making it extremely difficult to project registration numbers. In an effort to encourage people to attend the conference, as well as a desire to

charging conference rates that were too low to cover the rising costs associated with hosting such an event. A secondary issue was that the number of exhibitors and sponsors, significant sources of revenue, was much lower than in previous conference years. While there were ultimately 765 registrants, this number was not high enough to offset the low cost of registration. Likewise, while there were 39 exhibitors and 14 sponsors, this was a fraction of such supporters obtained in previous conference years. In addition, as we all experienced, costs for goods and services were at an all-time high during the



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give back to the members after several financially profitable conferences, a decision was made to offer historically low rates for attendance. Attendance numbers proved that this strategy was effective; however, the final budget indicated that the conference operated at a financial loss. Despite this disappointing result, the Conference Planning Committee learned a number of important lessons that they will carry with them in planning the 2025 conference.

Simply put, the primary issue that contributed to the financial deficit of the 2023 conference was

time of the 2023 conference. Although the conference resulted in a financial loss for NCLA, the positive outcomes were that the conference was well attended and feedback indicated that the attendees were highly satisfied and energized by the conference.

Going forward, the 2025 Conference Planning Committee is taking strategic steps to ensure that the event is not only successful in terms of attendee satisfaction but also in maintaining the financial viability of offering conferences in the long term. First, the Finance Committee is taking

a more active role in budget planning and monitoring expenditures. Second, efforts are being made to ensure that a sufficient number of exhibitors and sponsors are committed to the conference well in advance of the event, as this is a vital source of revenue that was not fully realized for the 2023 conference. Third, the Conference Planning Committee is considering assessment data from the 2023 conference to guide decisions about offering content and events that the attendees indicate they value. Finally, the Conference Planning Committee is carefully considering the appropriate conference rates that will balance cost with the value being offered to attendees.

Over its long history, NCLA has experienced ups and downs in its financial stability. Thanks to the diligence of the Finance Committee, those volunteering their time and expertise to serve in leadership roles in the Association, and the support of its membership, NCLA is well situated to be financially sustainable in the coming years. NCLA operates to serve its members, and will continue to evolve and be responsive to the changing needs of its membership.

Of note, the Association recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the NCLA Endowment. The Endowment was established June 21, 1999, with a donation of \$10,000. Since then, the Association and private donors have added \$141,109 to

the Endowment. The total Principal Balance is \$151,109.76. It is a remarkable fundraising accomplishment. A total of \$48,987 in grants have been made from the Endowment to the NC Library Association. As of this writing, the Fund Balance is \$224,073.16. Can you help too? [Consider contributing!](#)

NCLA is a non-profit organization and strives to be diligent in its financial stewardship. Working to balance revenues from conferences, membership dues, and the Endowment with the cost of providing events and services that serve the membership is an ongoing labor of love for those who volunteer their skills to NCLA. I invite all of you who are reading this column to consider volunteering with NCLA to contribute to the work of this Association in serving all libraries in North Carolina. I also thank you for your support in being a member of NCLA and look forward to seeing you at the 66th Biennial Conference to be held October 13-17, 2025, in Winston-Salem.

