

From the President: Thriving Together in Times of Change

As I sit down to reflect on the state of libraries and the challenges we face, I find myself both humbled and inspired by the resilience of our community. Libraries have always been a beacon of knowledge, a refuge for seekers of truth, and a foundation for strong, engaged communities. Yet, in recent years, the landscape in which we operate has shifted dramatically, bringing new stressors and uncertainties. From funding battles and intellectual freedom challenges to the evolving needs of our patrons, the role of libraries—and those of us who serve them—has never been more critical or complex.

Change, as we know, is both inevitable and relentless. The rapid pace of technological advancements, the growing polarization of public discourse, and the increased scrutiny of library collections and programming have placed significant pressure on our institutions. Many of us are navigating book challenges, budget constraints, staff shortages, and an ever-growing demand for digital access. These stressors can feel overwhelming, especially when compounded by personal and professional fatigue.

Yet, despite these challenges, libraries continue to stand firm as champions of intellectual freedom, equity, and lifelong learning. The question then becomes: How do we, as library professionals, maintain our motivation and continue to serve with passion and purpose in the face of adversity? It is easy to feel disheartened when our work is met with resistance, yet it is precisely in these moments that our mission becomes most vital. Our motivation can be renewed by remembering why we chose this profession in the first place: to serve our communities, to foster access to information, and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn and grow.

One way to stay motivated is to find strength in our collective efforts. None of us are in this alone. Across North Carolina and beyond, library workers, advocates, and supporters are standing up for the values that define our profession. Connecting with colleagues, sharing success stories, and seeking out



professional development opportunities can reignite our sense of purpose and remind us of the impact we make every day.

In times of uncertainty, it is crucial to take advantage of the resources available to us. Membership in the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA) offers community as well as extended benefits through NCLA's affiliations with organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA) and Unite Against Book Bans (UABB) which offer valuable support, advocacy tools, and professional development.

- **NCLA Membership:** As an association dedicated to supporting libraries across North Carolina, NCLA provides networking opportunities, training, and advocacy resources to help libraries navigate today's challenges. Whether through conference programming, committee work, or online discussions, NCLA fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. <https://nclaonline.org/>
- **ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF):** Intellectual freedom is under threat in many communities, making the work of the ALA OIF more important than ever. Their resources on censorship, book challenges, and policy development are invaluable for libraries facing these pressures. <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom>



- **Unite Against Book Bans (UABB):** UABB provides resources such as toolkits, talking points, and advocacy guides to help individuals and communities oppose censorship and defend the freedom to read. They also offer support through networking opportunities, training sessions, and direct action strategies to empower advocates in protecting access to diverse books. <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/>

One of the most rewarding aspects of our profession is the opportunity to come together, share experiences, and learn from one another. As we look ahead, I am excited about the upcoming **66th Biennial NCLA conference** to be held October 13-17, 2025 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem. The conference theme, *Books and Beyond: Navigating New Frontiers*, is a call for us to reconnect, exchange ideas, and reaffirm our commitment to libraries in North Carolina. As noted on the conference website: “This year’s theme focuses on all the work libraries and librarians do for their communities, from traditional book-related work to services, programs, and resources beyond that scope. It also encourages us to look towards the future, imagining and exploring how libraries can provide services and resources, and utilize emerging technologies, to meet the needs of a changing society.” This focus on resilience, innovation, and collaboration will help provide us with the

tools to adapt to change, advocate for our institutions, and harness new technologies to better serve our patrons. More importantly, we will celebrate the strength of our community and the power of standing together in the face of adversity.

Difficult times test our resolve, but they also remind us of the enduring importance of libraries. We are more than just repositories of books; we are centers of learning, catalysts for civic engagement, and safe havens for exploration and discovery. The work we do matters, and it matters now more than ever. As we continue to navigate challenges and embrace change, let us do so with a spirit of unity and determination. By supporting one another, leveraging our collective resources, and staying true to our mission, we will not only withstand the pressures we face—we will thrive.

Thank you for your dedication to this profession and for all you do to ensure that libraries remain vibrant and essential spaces for our communities. I look forward to standing alongside you at the NCLA Conference in 2025 and beyond. Together, we are stronger.