

President's Message: **For The Record**

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For a long time, I've have an idea that when a new President of the United States is elected, sometime after he's sworn in, amid all of the briefings, a wizened old man sits down with him to have The Talk. In my imagination the messenger is some cross between the Templar Knight from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and the International Express man from Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens*: officious yet wise. He tells the new President the why of it all, the real reasons why important things have happened in the ways they have, making all the decisions that seemed so wrong now seem inevitable. And probably not for the first time the new President thinks to himself "What have I gotten myself into?" This is clearly reflective of my desire for there to be, if not a reason for everything that happens, then at least some record of it all that can be reviewed, synthesized, and mined for meaning by future leaders. It's the Librarian in me I suppose.

Although being LITA President bears absolutely no resemblance to being President of the United States, I have been thinking about this little imagining of mine a lot lately. This is probably because, now that I am midway through my Presidential cycle (Vice President, President, Past President), I realize how much of what I've done has been marked by the absence of such a record. I did not receive a "How to be LITA President" manual along with my gavel, and no one gave me the LITA version of The Talk. The one person who could have done it, LITA Executive Director Jenny Levine, was as new to her position as I was to mine, so we have learned together and asked many questions of those around us with more experience.

We are in the midst of Election season, and will soon have a new President-Elect. Bohyun Kim and David Lee King are both excellent candidates (<http://litablog.org/2017/01/meet-your-candidates-for-the-2017-lita-election/>); those of you who have not yet voted have a difficult choice. In order to make a little progress toward developing that how-to guide I thought I'd document a few of things I've learned since being LITA President.

Being LITA President also means being President of a Division of the American Library Association.

When I was elected I expected to manage the business of the Library Information Technology Association—Board meetings, Committee Appointments, Presidential Programs and LITA Forums. Seeing the Board complete the LITA Strategic Plan (<http://www.ala.org/lita/about/strategic>) was a great accomplishment at this level.

While it's possible for a Division leader to have minimal interactions with "Big ALA" during their

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term and still be successful, my priority for my presidential year—increasing value LITAs receive from membership, especially those who are not able to attend in-person conferences—meant that I needed to learn more about how ALA works. After a year and a half, I have a much better understanding of the Association’s budgeting, publishing, and technology practices, and how all of these are impacted by declines in membership and decreasing revenues.

Future LITA leaders are going to need to continue to be engaged at the larger organizational level if we are to be able to use LITA’s technological knowledge and expertise to support ALA’s efforts to maximize efficiency while minimizing costs.

Being LITA President means speaking not just to, but for, an incredibly diverse community.

My plan when I became LITA President was to blog on a more regular basis. However, I didn’t expect some of my first communications to be about a mass shooting in Dallas (in advance of the Forum in Ft. Worth) or working with the Board to craft a statement on inclusivity after the US presidential election. The proverbial curse “may you live in interesting times” has certainly been true this year.

Having to speak to the LITA community about those issues made me acutely aware of my responsibility to adequately represent you when we’ve also been asked to weigh in on technology policy issues at the federal level such as the call for increased gun violence research and rescinding ISP regulations on privacy protection. The decision by the Board to include Advocacy and Information Policy as a primary focus for the strategic plan was certainly prescient. We are fortunate that our President Elect, Andromeda Yelton, is both well-versed in the issues and able to speak eloquently to them¹.

Being LITA President means being part of more than one team

I’m continually amazed at the hard work and dedication that Board members (<http://www.ala.org/lita/about/board>), Committee and Interest Group Chairs (<http://www.ala.org/lita/about/committees/chairs>), and anyone who fits into Involvement our Member persona (<http://litablog.org/2017/03/who-are-lita-members-lita-personas/>). The success of LITA as an organization is entirely due to the time and passion of this team.

But when you become LITA President-Elect you get a new team—the other Division Vice Presidents. This cohort travels to ALA HQ in Chicago in October after they are elected to meet each other and the incoming ALA President and learn about the structure of ALA. I have learned much from the other Presidents this year, and we have had a number of truly productive discussions about how the Divisions can collaborate and learn from each other to more effectively serve our members. LITA is directly benefitting from the expertise of the other groups and they are in turn looking to us for both our technical skillset and the successes we’ve had over 50-years as an Association.

Consider this a new preface to the *How to Be LITA President* manual. I hope that my successors find it useful, and that it will serve as an inspiration for any LITAns out there who are thinking about putting their name on the ballot in future years. It has been a marvelous and educational experience. And the gavel is pretty cool, too.

REFERENCES

1. Making ALA Great Again, Publisher's Weekly, Feb 17, 2017.
<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/72814-making-ala-great-again.html>