

REPORT OF ANDREA CECCHETTO

2021 PRESIDENT, ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



2021 has been another extraordinary year. As we mark the end of year-two of the pandemic, OLA looks forward to the upcoming 2022 Super Conference where we will once again come together virtually to showcase the exceptional contributions of our profession. This year's Super Conference builds on the exceptional work of the

2021 OLA Super Conference Planning committee who initiated this transition to a virtual platform. While we all missed seeing our friends and colleagues in person, the virtual conference created opportunities for new attendees who may not have otherwise been able to attend, resulting in an inclusive and energetic conference. This year's theme Gather/Se rassembler is a reminder that despite the isolation of the pandemic, we continue to come together and share our collective wisdom. Not only are we gathering together, we are doing so to gather our knowledge, our shared passions, and our connections to each other and our community. In the depths of another pandemic winter, the 2022 Super Conference gathering is a moment to reflect and celebrate, and I cannot wait to see you there.

The OLA board worked throughout 2021 on a number of transformative projects. OLA is launching a new Strategic Plan in 2022 to ensure the association continues to pursue priorities relevant to our members. Many of you contributed by participating in our members' survey to identify the areas of significance for the association. This input directly supported the development of the association's strategic goals for the upcoming years. Additionally, the board undertook a process with the Ontario Nonprofit Association called "Reimagining Governance". This workshop asked the board to reflect deeply on our leadership and consider how we may approach the governance of the association in new and transformational ways. The board's priority in this was making sure that our leadership best represents the membership and its ideals, priorities and needs. One of the board's most pressing concerns is to support OLA's work on anti-racism, equity and inclusion by ensuring the board itself reflects these values both functionally and structurally. This process was a rich exploration of who needs a voice in OLA's leadership and in what way can the board be responsive and dynamic in its role. 2022 will be an exciting year as the work of these projects take root.

OLA continued its lobbying work with the province, strongly advocating for the value of libraries, particularly in supporting communities through the pandemic. In the 2021 provincial budget processes, OLA demonstrated how libraries in all sectors provided vital support for digital learning and working, addressed inequities in digital access and supported the economic and social recovery of communities. OLA lobbied in the 2022 budget for sustainable provincial funding for public libraries, recognizing that this funding is critical especially as municipalities struggle with the financial impact of COVID-19. OLA further presented the need for an annual investment in the Ontario Digital Public Library to ensure equitable and affordable access to digital content across the province. Further, OLA highlighted the urgent need to support First Nation Libraries, both through the development of a new funding model that addresses inequities in funding for First Nation Libraries as well as to support the revitalization and perseverance of First Nation Languages. OLA additionally presented the need immediately to double funding to First Nation Libraries to provide appropriate income for their staff.

In the midst of this important work, OLA staff continued to maintain its' excellent service whilst undergoing some significant changes, most notably the move from its' Toronto offices. Staff have demonstrated resilience and commitment through another turbulent year and under the leadership of executive director Shelagh Paterson, were able to continue to provide stability and service to the membership. As I conclude my term as president, I am deeply grateful to the staff, board and division council members and committees for their dedication, perseverance and passion, and send my thoughts to all OLA members for a safe, healthy, and fulfilling year ahead.