



## REPORT OF MICHELLE ARBUCKLE

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

As we stride into 2024, it's vital to take a moment to look back on the past year and celebrate the collective efforts that propelled our library communities forward. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we saw a growth of nearly 20% in our membership numbers. Conference attendance also began to rebound, signaling a renewed engagement and commitment to our mission. Personally, it was an honor to step into the role of Executive Director, a responsibility that fills me with excitement and pride.

### **Membership Growth and Engagement**

In 2023, our focus on engaging students and the wider community yielded significant results. Initiatives like MentorMatch, the OCULA Lightning Strikes Student Award, and the introduction of ONLib Chats for students and new members made our events and council activities more accessible to the future leaders of our profession. This inclusive approach bore fruit, revitalizing our membership and participation rates.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiatives**

Our dedication to addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues reached new heights. Collaborative efforts with colleagues like Lily Kwok and EDI consultant Lisa MacVicar, along with the establishment of an Anti-Racism Committee, set OLA on the path to becoming an anti-racist organization. Through initiatives like the Spirit of Reconciliation Award and the I Read Canadian campaign, we continue to support First Nations Libraries and amplify Indigenous voices in literature.

### **Walking in Two Worlds**

The return of our in-person OLA Super Conference in 2023 marked a significant milestone after years of virtual conferencing. Embracing a hybrid approach, we ensured remote attendees could actively participate in discussions and learn from our featured speakers. We strived to walk in two worlds, fostering inclusivity at every turn.

### **Libraries for Life**

Our advocacy efforts in 2023, particularly regarding equitable funding for school libraries and maintaining critical funding for Ontario's public libraries, were robust. Engagements with stakeholders like the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, and the Ministry of Education underscored the importance of supporting and recognizing libraries' contributions to our communities' well-being and development.

### **Greatest Team Ever**

In conclusion, 2023 was a testament to resilience, innovation, and community spirit. Looking ahead, I am filled with optimism and purpose. Together with the remarkable OLA Board and the unstoppable OLA Staff, we'll continue building on our achievements, embracing new challenges, and advancing our mission to elevate the value and reach of libraries. To the members of OLA – your strength, voice, and unwavering support make you the greatest asset to the library community. Thank you for the dedication you bring to this association, and the passion you bring to your work.