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# OLA Strategic Plan

2025 - 2028



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# Executive Director's Message

This strategic plan marks a turning point — not just for the Ontario Library Association, but for the library sector we serve. It reflects our commitment to meet the moment: a time of rapid change, rising challenges, and growing expectations.

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Libraries are evolving, and so must we. From artificial intelligence to rising censorship, from shifting workforce needs to long-overdue calls for reconciliation and inclusion — our members are navigating complex realities. This plan was built with those realities in mind. It is practical, forward-thinking, and rooted in the belief that we are stronger when we work together across all library sectors.

As a nonprofit organization operating in an uncertain economic environment, we are not immune to financial pressures. Ensuring the longevity of the OLA means making thoughtful changes to how we work — streamlining where we can, investing where it counts, and always being accountable to our members. Fiscal responsibility is not separate from our mission — it enables it.

As your Executive Director, my focus is on implementation. That means aligning our resources, supporting our incredible staff and volunteers, and building partnerships that expand our reach and impact. It means deepening our advocacy with strong data, bold stories, and a united voice. And it means creating space for every member to feel seen, supported, and empowered. This plan doesn't sit on a shelf. It guides how we work — every program, every meeting, every decision.

Together, we're building a stronger, more inclusive future for libraries in Ontario.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Michelle Arbuckle,  
**Executive Director**

# President's Message

As the current OLA President I am exceptionally proud to present the Ontario Library Association's new strategic plan, highlighting the priorities of advocacy, innovation, and collaboration. This plan will guide the association's work over the next three years as OLA staff, volunteers, and members showcase excellence within our profession, while continuing to rise to unique challenges.

This new strategic plan is rooted in OLA's commitment to empower our members in the library and information services sectors by being grounded in the key values that guide and inform our work.



OLA recognizes that the principles of decolonization, equity, diversity, and inclusion, are foundational values to our association and sector, and have centered them throughout this strategic plan.

This plan is more than a guiding document. It is a shared commitment between the association, the OLA Board and our entire membership that encourages careful thought and action in advocating for our work. This commitment was present throughout the collaborative development of this strategic plan. We have heard directly from our members about what was important to them as individual workers in libraries, and what they considered to be the critical priorities necessary for the future of libraries.

Our members played a significant role in creating, shaping and refining this plan to become a collective roadmap that calls all of us to action. Through this collaborative effort, the priorities of advocacy, innovation, and collaboration became essential pillars for our sector. As you read this plan, I hope you find it inspirational and can find opportunities in it for your own decisive efforts to create effective change over the next three years.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this strategic plan. Thank you to the OLA staff, volunteers, and members for your tireless work – it is only through our collective efforts that this plan has come to fruition.

Matthew Rohweder,  
OLA President 2025

# OLA Mission

We empower our members in the library and information services sectors to build informed, participatory, and inclusive communities through education, advocacy, partnerships and research.

## OLA Vision & Values

OLA is leading and inspiring the growth and innovation of the library and information services sector. Our set of guiding values has stood the test of time and continue to guide us in our work.

- Responsiveness and Awareness
- Intellectual Freedom
- Diversity
- Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- Innovation
- Accountability

# OLA Strategic Plan

## 2025-2028

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) regularly creates a strategic plan as a critical tool for guiding our work and ensuring that we remain focused on our mission, responsive to change, and aligned with the needs of our members and the broader library community. This plan is not a document that sits on a shelf – it is actively used throughout the year to inform decision-making, allocate resources, and shape programs and initiatives across the OLA.

The OLA Board, staff and each Division and Committee uses the strategic plan to build an annual work plan, aligning the divisions' goals and activities with the broader vision of the Association. This shared focus allows us to move together, with clarity and purpose.

The OLA is committed to cultivating a culture of decolonization, equity, diversity, inclusion and access into all aspects of the organization. Rather than isolating these values, we have embedded them within all our strategic priorities. The Association will work to fulfill the commitments outlined in its 2024 Inclusive Librarianship Statement, addressing various forms of marginalization within the organization and library sector as part of its 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. Decolonization and IDEA will serve as the foundation for all our strategic priorities, ensuring that our work is actioned from a lens of creating a more inclusive association and sector.



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This plan reflects who we are, where we want to go, and the values that will guide us along the way.

# Strategic Priorities

## Champion Libraries. Secure their Future.



The OLA will mobilize support for libraries through advocacy and government relations, while empowering members to effectively demonstrate the value of their libraries. As trusted institutions at the heart of communities, schools, campuses, and workplaces, libraries deserve strong and consistent backing from both the public and all levels of government, as well as the very institutions they serve. To amplify this effort, the OLA will equip divisional councils to become advocacy leaders, enabling them to champion key issues and mentor their peers.

This priority recognizes that advocacy is most effective when it is collective, evidence-informed, and sustained over time. By raising awareness of the many and varied contributions libraries make and galvanizing public support, the OLA aims to ensure that libraries are not only protected – but championed – as essential to a thriving, equitable society.

### Tactics

- Proactively cultivate robust, strategic relationships with key Ontario government ministries to ensure libraries are recognized as essential community and social infrastructure.
- Expand and deepen the Save Our School Libraries campaign to secure the future of Ontario's public school libraries amid growing cuts to funding and staffing. Advocate for the essential role of qualified library professionals in every school, and reinforce that well-funded school libraries are a cornerstone of literacy and student success.
- Highlight the work of members in First Nation Public Libraries, sharing their stories and professional experiences to increase awareness of their contributions and needs, and to build advocacy campaigns that support their sustainability and growth.
- Train and empower members to serve as advocacy leaders for the sector, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to effectively champion key issues, mentor their peers, and train others within their divisions to drive collective impact.



## Invest in People. Strengthen the Sector.

Investing in library people is the most powerful way to strengthen the sector. OLA will lead the way in providing educational and professional development opportunities that will help OLA members adapt to a rapidly changing technological and socio-political environment, particularly in response to the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). As stewards of knowledge and information, library professionals must continually upgrade their skills to stay relevant, effective and forward-thinking.

OLA will work with members to develop innovative ways of operating in our continually evolving landscape. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, we empower individuals to grow, adapt and thrive in service of their communities and organizations.

### Tactics

- Develop and refine resources and programs across all library sectors to tackle key issues, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and intellectual freedom, while remaining responsive and adaptable to arising challenges. By working together across school, public, academic, health and special libraries, the OLA will strengthen sector-wide understanding and capacity to navigate complex, and rapidly evolving issues.
- Promote cross-divisional collaboration in delivering professional development and educational training opportunities that meet the needs of our members and enables innovation.
- Foster community dialogue and make better use of technology to create opportunities for members to learn from each other, and share best practices and lessons learned.
- Provide focused support for our members in smaller and/or lesser-resourced libraries by tailoring resources to suit their needs.

## Create Value. Build Belonging.

The OLA will grow and enhance the membership and volunteer experience, while developing the skills of its staff to meet members' needs and association goals. This will be accomplished through targeted outreach, communications, and programming that reflect the diversity of our membership and the evolving landscape of the library sector. Whether through volunteer experiences, professional networks, or shared advocacy, your OLA membership should be a valued part of your professional life, as well as a rewarding and empowering experience.



### Tactics

- Enhance programs, resources, and funding opportunities and reduce barriers to participation for Indigenous librarians and rural libraries.
- Advance OLA's Inclusive Librarianship efforts to identify existing barriers to participation faced by Indigenous, Black, People of Colour and other marginalized people in the Ontario library community.
- Engage in targeted student outreach to cultivate future talent and volunteerism, by creating more experiential learning and mentorship opportunities.
- Create spaces for connection and build communities that support learning through collaboration.
- Expand membership offerings and refine outreach strategies to drive membership growth and demonstrate the unique value of being an OLA member.



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