

*Inside*OLBA



MESSAGE FROM YOUR EDITOR

Greetings to all of you, and I hope that your winter was a pleasant one, massive snowfalls notwithstanding! Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of *your* newsletter. In the articles below you will hopefully find useful information about library governance. This edition includes profiles of some of the OLBA Council members (more to come in the autumn edition), and what motivates them to work to promote library boards and libraries in general. Please know that each and every Council member would love to hear from you, should you have any issues in your local board for which you seek guidance, some advice to provide, or simply to let them know what is going on in your library. To reach your regional councillor, their contact information can be found at [OLBA Council - Ontario Library Association](#).

In addition to learning about your Council in this issue, there is also a good recap of the recent OLBA Bootcamp at the 2025 OLA Super Conference, as well as a message from your 2025 President, Nathan Etherington. I hope that you benefit from this edition, and I would love to hear from you if you have any comments about anything you read here or, better still, if you have something to contribute for our next issue, which is slated for the autumn of this year. Many thanks for your attention, and best of luck in your vital work on your respective library boards.

Yours in governance,

Kerry Badgley

North Grenville Public Library Board

MESSAGE FROM YOUR 2025 OLBA PRESIDENT

Dear Library Board Trustees,

I want to express my thanks to our Past President, Marj Poirier for her work over the past year and a half. Ontario Library Boards' Association has experienced its own challenges since mid-2023 and Marj lead a rebuilding effort so that we now have a full Council with a member in every position. Marj has always been a strong advocate for libraries in Northern Ontario and her insights will be valuable to OLBA and the Board of Directors on OLA in the coming year.

The year always starts out with OLBA Bootcamp, which was very successful in bringing library boards from across the province together for in person discussions, networking, and professional development opportunities. Bursaries are available for libraries in Northern Ontario (2 bursaries available) and for boards serving a population of under 15,000 (1 bursary available). If you have not attended in previous years, we strongly encourage you to attend next year's Bootcamp on Saturday, January 31st, 2026.

One of my goals this year is to increase communication between OLBA and its membership, which also aligns with the OLA Strategic Plan by increasing the membership experience. If you have questions about how your library board functions or issues that keep your library board up at night, please reach out to me at contactme@nathanetherington.ca or one of your fellow OLBA Councillors so we can discuss it at our upcoming meetings. OLBA can only achieve its mandate to support library boards when we hear from you and your library boards' challenges and concerns.

Library Boards across the province do valuable, and often unappreciated, community service. Our award to Adrian Graham at Springwater Township Public Library for standing up for the independence of the library and attempts at municipal overreach exemplifies the great work that I know we all contribute towards across the province. I'm wishing you all a successful 2025 year and leadership role you play in your communities.

Sincerely,
Nathan Etherington



NEWS

OLBA Bootcamp 2025 Highlights

Attendees to our 2025 Bootcamp gathered at the Intercontinental Hotel in Downtown Toronto on Saturday, February 1st, kicking off the day with the OLBA Annual General Meeting at 8:45. Marj Poirer led the AGM highlighting the work of OLBA and presenting changes to OLBA Council's governing By-law, moving away from a geographic based group to a mixture of geography and population group consistent with how Ontario Public Libraries Association (OPLA) is represented.

Keynote Speaker

Our Keynote Speaker was Dr. Kate Graham from Western University in London who spoke about The Curse of Leadership. Kate highlighted the troubling trend towards disinformation and the deterioration of public perceptions of trust in institutions occurring in the world. She highlighted the role that library board trustees have in defending intellectual freedom and democratic values.

One startling graph she shared noted that in western democracies, optimism for the next generation is at an all-time low (9% in France and 21% in Canada) while in authoritarian regimes trust is much higher (69% in Saudi Arabia). She also shared about the gap of trust between income levels where 12 years ago in 2012 the spread was 6% between low and high incomes (43% and 49%, respectfully), which has spread to some 13% currently in 2025 (48% and 61%, respectfully). Kate shared our roles as library trustees in bucking that trend.

Kate then solicited some interactive feedback from attendees where participants shared community, passion/care, literacy, and advocacy were some of the key reasons they joined the library board. Attendees also expressed a wide range of emotions after a library board meeting from energized, motivated, and accomplished to tired, relived, and overwhelmed. Attendees also expressed that the work we do makes a difference and the great teamwork as a board, but often don't feel as valued or appreciated for their contributions.

The main challenge expressed by Bootcamp attendees was budget, municipal relations, and diversity, trustees must be engaged, committed, and enthused about their work. Trustees also wanted to let their fellow trustees not to give up, stay positive, and encouraging to keep up the work of being true community champions.

Navigating Memoranda of Understanding

Creating a successful relationship between the Library and the Municipality is the best way to serve the citizens of your local community. Although the Public Libraries Act in Ontario provides an umbrella structure to define at a high level how the relationship should work, each community across Ontario has unique needs that aren't covered at the provincial legislation level. Trust is essential.

This is where creating a well-crafted Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Public Library and the Municipality comes into play.

Many Library Boards across the province have entered into Memorandums of Understanding with their municipality to solidify their working relationships. Some are complex in their details, while others are broader in context.

The Library Board Trustee Bootcamp gave attendees a chance to hear from experienced library leaders on how Library Boards can navigate this important part of the Library/Municipality relationship.

MOU development stories from libraries across Ontario were shared with attendees led by Rebecca Hunt (Temiskaming Shores Public Library), Tara Wong (Oakville Public Library) and Sabrina Saunders & Laurey Gillies (both from Blue Mountains Public Library). The MOU examples shared at the Bootcamp, and many more, can be found on the [Ontario Library Service Resource](#) website.

Are you looking to change the relationship? What are some things that you should consider when entering into an MOU with your municipality? Start thinking about

this important topic today.

Library Safety Issues and Library Boards

The next session of Saturday's Boot Camp, "Responding to safety issues with your Library Board," could not have been timelier. No library has been immune to the rising number of incidents involving verbal abuse, violent behaviour and alcohol and drug abuse. It's a rising scale of conduct that is being seen daily, although more libraries than not are seeing a jump in incidents right to violent behaviour and onward.

This session was broken into two parts.

First, there was a panel of four library professionals who represented small, medium and large Ontario libraries. Matthew McDonald, CEO of Sault Ste. Marie Public Library, Melissa Robertson, Director of Corporate and Operational Services, Orillia Public Library, Lita Barrie, CEO Burlington Public Library, and Jennifer Tarnawski, Board Chair, Burlington Public Library. One situation that really stood out as being unique, almost boarding on the impossible, was told by Matthew McDonald. Somehow a woman got behind the wall in the library and a lot of thought was put into how to get her safely out.

The second session was interactive. The room was divided in half, and each side was presented with a case study. Participants were given time to discuss in groups prior to sharing their thoughts with those in the room. Panelists helped give insight into the case studies as well.

This session was extremely interesting. The rising incidents which are currently impacting public libraries across the province are felt by everyone. In these uncertain times, there is no doubt that they will continue to become more commonplace. Hopefully the participants in this session were able to take away some useful information to share with their respective library boards.

Succession Planning, Board Evaluation and Board Recruitment

The final session of the day was on succession planning, board evaluation, and board recruitment. The Ontario Library Service (OLS) kicked off by speaking in broad terms about the principles of these three topics, including legacy documents. Both participating libraries shared examples of their Board Legacy documents and their role in educating new library board members of the successes and challenges of the previous library board during their orientation. Springwater Township Public Library then shared about their board evaluation processes and how they had refined them over time starting with a long and comprehensive survey, shortening it to improve the feedback, and increasing responses to questions from a 5-point scale to a 10-point scale.

The County of Brant Public Library presented their board recruitment strategy by hosting a Library Board Member Bootcamp during the election period. This included presentation about what library board members do and don't do in their roles as trustees. It was attended by a candidate that was successful and became

the youngest elected official in our municipality's history. When the municipality had to appoint the new library board, they had the longest list of applicants to be able to make the best library board for the municipality.

Final Thoughts on Bootcamp

Overall, the 2025 OLBA Bootcamp was a very successful one, and attendees were reminded to email topic suggestions to olba.council@accessola.com by the beginning of June for consideration in the planning of Bootcamp in 2026. Thank you for all who attended this year's Bootcamp, and we hope to see you in 2026!

YOUR 2025 OLBA COUNCIL

Nathan Etherington



Nathan Etherington is a Board Member for the County of Brant Public Library since 2018. Nathan studied Earth Science and Geography at the University of Waterloo before attending Western University for a Bachelor of Education. These two areas of study propelled Nathan into the Museum sector where he completed a Certificate in Museum Studies with the Ontario Museum Association. He joined OLBA in 2021 assisting as a Councillor for Southwest Region, Treasurer, and Vice-President of OLBA before becoming OLBA President in 2025.

I joined my local library board as a result of his museum work. The museum's board was not functioning properly, and he sought to learn from others in the Gallery, Library, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) Sector. He regularly takes principles of good governance exhibited by the library and applies it to his work as a Museum Professional. The library has always been a favourite place to me in childhood and I wanted to give back to my community by serving on the library board.

Volunteering with several other community and not-for-profit organizations has made me integrated with the larger community and the library also collaborates with these partners. As a governance geek, I also am Chair of the Planning Committee that reviews library policies to ensure that the library is a place that everyone is welcome and allows me to use my political acuity to advocate for changes that benefit the library and its services. Feel free to email me any questions or concerns at contactme@nathanetherington.ca.

Marj Poirier



My name is Marj Poirier and I am your current OLBA Past President. I live in Kenora, Ontario. For you geography buffs out there, this is the last community before the Manitoba border, which is only about 35km away. I live in a different time zone and I have to drive 2.5 hours to Winnipeg to get to a commercial airport.

I have been on our local library board for about 20 years and am currently serving as Chairperson.

I am also on the Patient and Family Advisory Committee for our hospital, a member of the local Community Foundation, a member of the local Terry Fox Run Committee and I volunteer for Campfire Circle in the Muskokas. In my spare time I like to run, do yoga, quilt and of course read!

In 2012, during Super Conference, I was having a long conversation about issues in the North, and how "Cut to the Chase" would be an excellent learning tool for us, with Joyce Cunningham. Sometime during our discussion, she asked if I had ever considered getting involved in OLBA. At the time I was a board member of OLS-N (before OLS), yet the idea intrigued me, especially if Joyce Cunningham was suggesting it. She said she saw in me both the interest and the passion to be more than simply an attendee at the yearly conference.

During my teaching career, I was heavily involved in my association at the provincial level, serving on numerous committees over the years, often as chairperson. I felt very strongly that the voices of the northern and small communities needed to be heard. Just as there is a uniqueness to living in Southern Ontario, there is also one for the North.

That being said, public libraries regardless of their location or size share many of the same issues. I looked at the objectives of the OLBA, and I felt that with my prior experience, that I would be a good fit to the board. Supporting other library boards through events such as Boot Camp, and documents such as "Cut to the Chase", offering assistance on how to talk to candidates prior to an election, and promoting specific needs to our government, were elements that appealed to me greatly. Sadly, in today's world, safety and security in public libraries have become at forefront of everyone's radar. These are when things like board forums or "on lib" chats are so important to attend, because another board might have an idea that might work, if only for a while. Now, more than ever, we need to come together as one cohesive unit with ideas about how to be a place for all, as it is stated in the Library Act, while ensuring the safety of our staff and patrons.

I became involved on the OLBA board post-COVID, and I haven't looked back. I was elected Vice-President in my second year, but due to a series of unfortunate circumstances, I became president halfway through that year. There wasn't any time to ease into the position, however I had a lot of support from the incredible staff at OLA. I hope to be involved in some capacity for years to come.

David Mackey

David Mackey is a passionate advocate for community engagement, equity, and innovation. A dedicated father, experienced volunteer, and proven leader, David brings a deep commitment to libraries which have a long history of building stronger, more inclusive communities in our past and are essential to our shared future.

With a career in high-tech management, David successfully navigated the challenges of corporate leadership, fostering collaboration and driving solutions in complex environments. He has mastered skills in relationship management, digital transformation, and problem-solving to benefit both large multinational organizations and small businesses. His expertise includes connecting local enterprises with customers.

Now retired, David serves on the Stratford Public Library Board, the Ontario Library Service Board, and the Ontario Library Boards' Association. Through his dedication to libraries, he champions the role of accessible, trusted knowledge in creating resilient, human-centered communities. At the national level, David contributes his expertise as a board member of the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA), advocating for safe, secure, and inclusive digital infrastructure across Canada.

Nick van Velzen

My name is Nick van Velzen, and I am a member of library board for Hamilton. I have volunteered with libraries in one form or another for twenty years, everything from stacking chairs to being board chair. When I left school and started working as a lawyer, I joined the board for Grimsby and served a few terms there. Upon moving to Hamilton for my current job, I was chosen for the Hamilton board, and am now its longest-serving member. I find the work incredibly rewarding. It is so important to give back to one's community.

I work as an in-house lawyer doing commercial leasing. It can be dull and isolating work, which makes my volunteer gigs even more important. In addition to my library board work, I volunteer at the Shaw Festival in summer.

I live in Hamilton in a very mixed neighbourhood. I bike to work and go home for lunch. My hours are pretty relaxed for my profession. I'm big on libraries (obviously), theatre, camping, road trips, sailing the Queen Mary 2 as often as I can afford, and Spa Days. I have no pets.

Wayne Greco: Sault Ste Marie Public Library (Board Chair)

Retired Educator and Administrator

Currently Principal, Batchewana First Nation Education

President, RTOERO District 3, Retired Teachers of Ontario

FOPL Federation of Public Libraries, Vice President



I have been a member of the Board of the SSM Public Library for more than 14 years. Libraries and schools share a vital partnership in nurturing independent learners and critical thinkers. By fostering information literacy, libraries empower students to navigate the overwhelming flow of misinformation and half-truths, ensuring they can discern credible sources from unreliable ones. As hubs of accurate, diverse, and well-curated knowledge, libraries equip learners with skills to research, analyze, and think critically; an essential foundation for lifelong learning and informed decision-making.

My role continues to focus on bringing these two organizations together for the benefit of the community today and the development of the citizens and leaders of tomorrow.

Eric Guernsey

I've been proud to serve my community as a Public Library Trustee since 2019 and as Chair of the Oshawa Public Library Board since 2023. During that time, I have also had the privilege of serving as the East-Central Region Councillor and Treasurer of the OLBA. I have also represented the OLBA on the Ontario Public Library Guidelines and Accreditation Council for the past year.

My professional background is in strategic communications and community engagement in both the government and not-for-profit sectors. I served for nearly a decade as the Senior Advisor to Oshawa's Member of Parliament and currently manage communication for the workforce planning board in Durham Region.

I love volunteering in my community and have served on the Boards of the Oshawa KICKS soccer club, the Durham Regional Police Community Council, and the Safe City Oshawa Partnership. I am currently a member of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Committee and recently received the honour of being awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal for Volunteer Service in my community.

The CEO approached me about joining my library board, and I accepted because it would allow me to use my experience and connections to serve my community meaningfully. Libraries are vital resources in our communities, providing space for people to connect, learn and grow. In an age where access to quality information, thoughtful programming and opportunities for genuine human-to-human connection are increasingly rare, public libraries empower individuals and their communities. Public Library Trustees play an essential role in educating communities and advocating for the protection of these vital spaces. It's both a privilege and an honour to have the opportunity to serve my community in this role.

Kerry Badgley

A proud member of the North Grenville Public Library Board since 2002, I earned my PhD in Canadian History (specializing in Ontario social/political history) in 1996, and have taught as a sessional lecturer at Carleton University since that time. I have also taught in the School of Information Studies at the University of Ottawa and in the Information Management Department at Algonquin College.

I have served in several capacities in the Government of Canada, including as an archivist at Library and Archives Canada (I am currently the Information Manager for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency). I have served as Editor of the *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, and am currently Book Review Co-editor of *The Canadian Historical Review*. As noted above, I edit InsideOLBA. I have also had the honour to have served as Chair of the OLBA Board (2016), and to have served as President of the Ontario Library Association (2017). For many years I was also a Council member of the Southern Ontario Library Service. Finally, I created and continue to operate the Sarah Badgley Literacy Fund for Rural Ontario Children (administered by OLA), named in honour of my late daughter. I am passionate about public libraries, and the many, many ways in which they provide services to their respective communities. I live in Kemptville with my wife Sue, son Paul, and daughter Shannon (and two high-maintenance cats).

Quite simply, I love libraries, and all that they stand for. Each time I walk into the University Library at Carleton University, I make a point of going up a certain staircase, in which there is a poster with the following quotation by Doris Lessing: "A public library is the most democratic thing in the world. What can be found there has undone dictators and tyrants." Very wise words, in my opinion, and they make what we do as public library board members come into sharp focus, especially in these times. Public libraries are true community hubs, and have changed to adapt to the times in which we find ourselves. I am proud to play a small role in their future development and in performing the vital services that they do for the benefit of all.



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