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Ontario Library Association

2025 Annual Report

Building a stronger, more inclusive
future for libraries in Ontario.

President's Report

2025 was a year of incredible change at OLA, including the new strategic plan, which highlights advocacy, innovation, and collaboration. These pillars inform every aspect of OLA's work throughout 2025.

At our first ever OLA Town Hall, we announced our new Membership Engagement Model. This model, with the introduction of five new communities of practice, will help bring together library workers from all sectors across Ontario. I am so excited about these new communities and the ways members will be able to collaborate and innovate in the years to come. We also found new and original ways to ensure that OLA maintains its financial health, which will help guide the association into 2026 and beyond.

The Inclusive Libraries Report was a big piece of our work in 2025. This report is a milestone in OLA's commitment to decolonization, anti-racism, equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), and accessibility. The report's incredible scope will shape OLA and the library sector, and be a major part of conversations around EDI in libraries. It was an honour to serve as president while formalizing and finalizing this fantastic piece of work.

We saw gains and losses on the advocacy front. The announcement of the Internet Connectivity Grant, which will increase access to high-speed internet service for all First Nation Public Libraries and rural libraries. However, we also saw the introduction of Bill C-15, which could eliminate reduced postage rates for library materials, directly impacting interlibrary loan services. Advocacy should continue to be a major element in all our work in library land and I encourage you to seek out avenues to get involved.



I am so proud of the work we accomplished this past year. And even more, with these new structures and plans in place, I am looking forward to everything OLA will achieve in 2026.

Matt Rohweder
OLA President 2025

Executive Director's Report

2025 was a year of big ideas, meaningful change, and steady progress at the Ontario Library Association. Guided by our new Strategic Plan, OLA leaned into advocacy, innovative programming, and collaborative projects as touchstones for how we show up for OLA members across Ontario.

We tried new things this year! And we found new ways to inspire our members and to bring them together across sectors. These changes are already helping our members connect, share expertise, and learn from one another in more flexible and responsive ways.

This was also a year of organizational learning and stability for the OLA staff. We invested in our team culture, improved our operational clarity, and aligned our work more closely with our strategic priorities. While the realities of a membership-funded model require ongoing adaptation, the commitment of our members, volunteers, partners, and staff continues to be our greatest strength.



Together, we closed 2025 proud of what we accomplished, honest about the challenges, and energized by a simple truth that guides our work: we persist.

Michelle Arbuckle
Executive Director

Our Highlights

Super Conference: Building Bridges

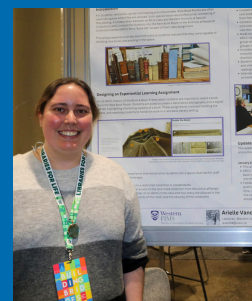
This year's conference was all about connecting individuals with issues, identities, and ideas. From carefully considered programming to attendee experience to creative resource sharing, we committed to highlighting libraries as welcoming places for all, responding to the changing needs of our communities, and facilitating connections for knowledge-sharing.

"Every year at SC I feel seen, valued and validated, so inspired, and as though I truly belong. Every year, I walk away feeling like, yes, this is where I am meant to be. In library land with these incredible people dedicated to their communities and always, always fighting for what's right."

- 2025 Super Conference Attendee

Number of attendees: 4358

Percentage of in-person attendees: 76%



Forest of Reading: Canada's Largest Recreational Reading Program

Literacy and lifelong learning are two values that the OLA's Forest of Reading program advances through programming, which develops a love of reading.

This year, through the 2025 Forest of Reading program and Festival, we were thrilled to:

- Celebrate reading Canadian: 178 English and French authors and illustrators were nominated
- Give kids a proven head start: 121,697 kids voted for books they read for fun
- Encourage a love of reading: 5,693 people attended the Festival and Fête
- Put libraries at centre stage: 13,000+ classes participated in virtual content

This year was special as it marked the second annual Fête de la Forêt de la lecture, which offered Le prix Mélèze and Le prix Tamarac a unique spotlight. The year also involved the second facilitation of the Pen Pal program, where 49+ classes and 1,648+ readers shared their love of books with students from provinces across the country.



2025 Forest of Reading Winners

Blue Spruce Award™ Winner: Lost Stick by Anoosha Syed (Viking Books for Young Readers)

Silver Birch Express Award® Winner: Lost & Found: Based on a True Story by Mei Yu (Union Square Kids)

Silver Birch Fiction Award® Winner: The Legendary Mo Seto 01 by A. Y. Chan (Aladdin / Simon & Schuster)

Yellow Cedar Award Winner: Haunted Canada Graphic Novel 01: Four Terrifying Tales by Joel A. Sutherland (Scholastic Canada Ltd.)

Red Maple Award™ Winner: 40 Days in Hicksville by Christina Kilbourne (DCB Young Readers)

White Pine Award™ Winner: The Space Between Here & Now by Sarah Suk (Quill Tree Books / HarperCollins Canada)

Le prix Peuplier : Hugo par Catherine Braun-Grenier (Fonfon)

Le prix Mélèze : Le Cumulus Machinus par Ugo Monticone (la courte échelle)

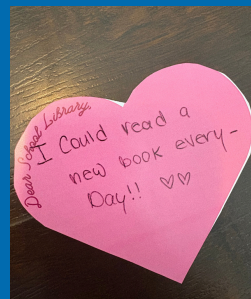
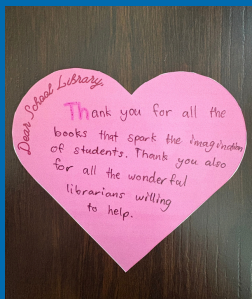
Le prix Tamarac : L'homme aux araignées par Jocelyn Boisvert (la courte échelle)



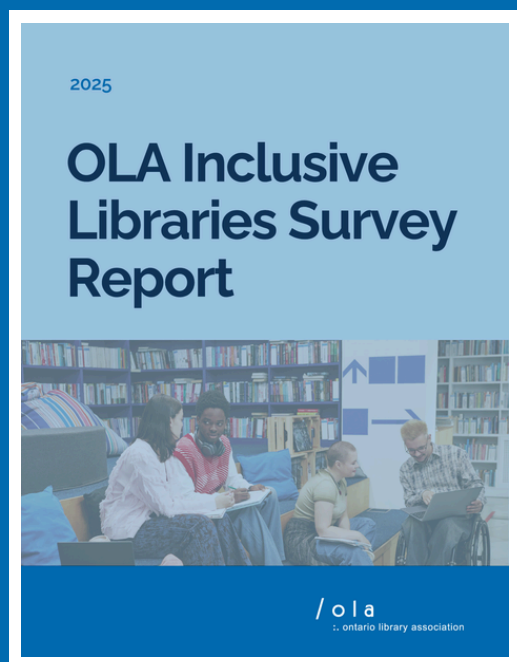
Dear School Library

Dear School Library invites people to write love letters celebrating their school libraries—the programs, people, and spaces that make them vital to school life. This initiative strengthens community among school library professionals while gathering powerful stories to advocate for their impact. Thank you to Lindsay Zier-Vogel's "Dear Street," for the inspiration for this project.

The OLA was proud to partner with Canadian School Libraries (CSL) to bring the campaign to the national stage as the official theme for Canadian School Library Day 2025. Write a love letter at the [official website](#).



Inclusive Libraries



The OLA took a major step forward in its anti-racism journey by conducting the *Inclusive Libraries: State of the Sector Survey* and developing a report that highlights findings and actionable recommendations. We're grateful to the over 1,100 library professionals across Ontario who shared their experiences through the survey, helping shed light on barriers to participation within the Association and the wider sector. The report provides a framework for addressing racism and other forms of marginalization within the sector and will continue to serve as a guide for OLA leadership as they weave equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization into their annual workplans.

[Read the Inclusive Libraries Survey Report.](#)

Membership Report

OLA's membership work is focused on retention, engagement, and clearly demonstrating value to library workers across sectors. Over the past year, efforts centered on strengthening how members connect with the association and ensuring they receive timely, relevant, and sector-specific support.

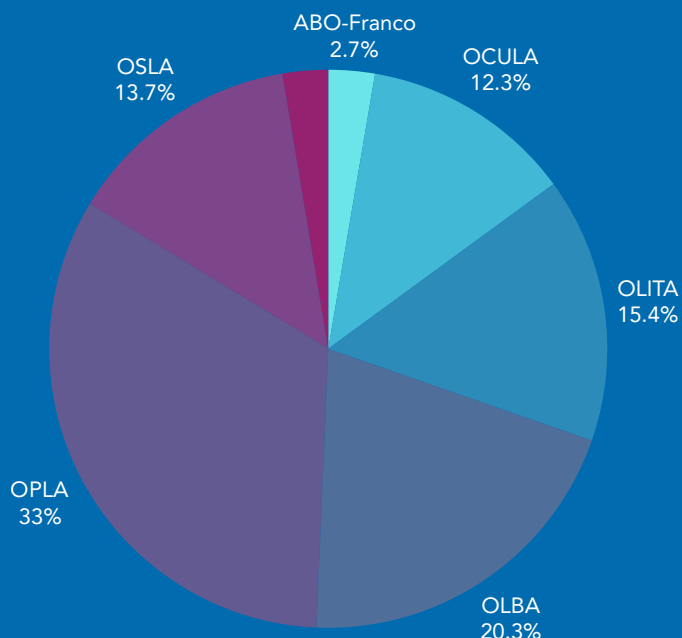
Key initiatives include:

- Launch of a structured welcome and renewal email series.
- Improved sector alignment to ensure members know what's going on in their sector.
- Continuing student outreach.
- Increased promotion of auto-renewal to make it easier for members to maintain engagement.

Affordability remains a significant concern for many members. In 2025 the OLA implemented revised membership rates to reduce financial barriers. This change reflects OLA's commitment to equity, access and supporting library workers at all stages of their careers.

Demonstrating a clear return on investment continues to be a priority. Engagement with a professional association is an investment in professional growth, advocacy and collective impact. OLA provides value that individual workplaces cannot offer alone, including sector wide advocacy, leadership opportunities, and collaboration. Clearly articulating the unique role OLA plays in strengthening libraries and supporting the people who work in them remains central to our membership strategy.

Membership Breakdown



Total Individual Memberships:

3727

Total Associate Memberships: 114

Freedom to Read Week

February 23 – March 1, 2025

OLA continues to be a organizing partner for Freedom To Read Week, along with CULC and Library and Archives Canada. This year we led a panel discussion centred on the reading habits of teenagers, No More Bubble-Wrap: Teens, Tough Themes & Open Discussions, was moderated by Michelle Arbuckle, and included panelists Lawrence Hill, Maria Martella, and Wendy Burch-Jones. The panel discussed the importance of giving teens the freedom to think, question, grow, and dove into how we can move forward.

[Watch the recording.](#)



Lawrence Hill

Canadian Award-Winning Author

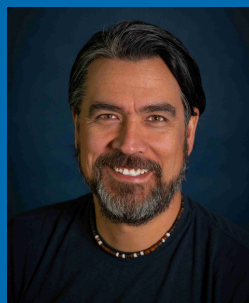
Maria Martella

Owner, Tinlids

Wendy Burch-Jones

2025 OSLA Council President

Reflecting on the importance of books, the power of stories, and our right to access them, OLA's Forest of Reading program offered its first special virtual event of the year, which featured author and 2025 Silver Birch Fiction nominee David A. Robertson and youth literacy advocate Ainara Alleyne. Together, they discussed what happens when books are banned and what to do to protect the right to read and was viewed by 414 classes.



David A. Robertson

2025 Silver Birch Fiction nominee

Ainara Alleyne

Youth literacy advocate

[Watch the recording.](#)



2025

Board of Directors

OLA President

Matthew Rohweder
Wilfrid Laurier University



OLA Vice-President

Lita Barrie
Burlington Public Library



OLA Treasurer

Caroline Goulding
Dryden Public Library



Wendy Burch Jones
Toronto District School Board

Orien Duda
Windsor Regional Hospital

Amir Feridooni
Markham Public Library

Megan Garza
Markham Public Library

Sarah Gauthier
Hamilton Public Library

Kanta Kapoor
Milton Public Library

Feather Maracle
Six Nations Public Library



Marj Poirier
Kenora Public Library Board

Shelby Thaysen
University of Toronto

Victoria Tsonos
Université Saint-Paul //
Saint Paul University



2025

Divisional Presidents



L'Association des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Franco

ABO-Franco President
Mohammed Harti
Université de l'Ontario français



Ontario College and University Library Association

OCULA President
Mikayla Redden
University of Toronto



Ontario Health Library and Information Association

OHLIA President
Zachary Osborne
Unity Health



Ontario Library Boards' Association

OLBA President
Nathan Etherington
County of Brant Public Library Board



Ontario Library and Information Technology Association

OLITA President
Ashley Prince
The Blue Mountains Public Library



Ontario Public Library Association

OPLA President
Leah Rucchetto
Caledon Public Library



Ontario School Library Association

OSLA President
Wendy Burch Jones
Toronto District School Board

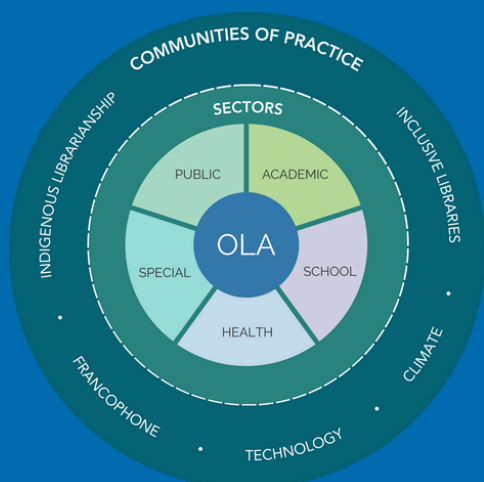
Our Work

OLA Strategic Plan

This year, we were excited to launch the [OLA Strategic Plan 2025-2028](#), the first strategic plan under the leadership of our Executive Director, Michelle Arbuckle. This plan brings renewed energy and focus to all sectors of the library community and serves as a roadmap for how OLA will stand beside you – a member of OLA – in the years ahead. Informed by consultation with our members, this strategic plan centers on advocacy, investing in people, and building belonging for members. 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.



Reconfiguring the Structure of OLA



OLA made a bold step in 2025, reconfiguring our 7 divisions into 5 sectors of library service. We also developed, per member request, the first 6 Communities of Practice. Informed by member feedback, these changes give ways for Councils to interact with their members, and members a way to engage, learn and grow from each other. While these officially launch at our Annual General Meeting and Super Conference 2026, the consultation, planning, Town Halls, and gathering of member minds to initiate this new model have been one of the major projects of 2025.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice are the newest addition to OLA — flexible, cross-sector interest groups where members can come together around issues, passions, and innovations. Members are now able to choose their sector, and indicate any communities of interest. As more members join, each community will grow and take shape.

Available Communities of Practice

Technology Community
Francophone Community
Indigenous Librarianship Community
Inclusive Libraries Community

Climate Action Community
Library Research Community
Bookmobile Community

Committees

Thank you to the following committees for all their work in 2025:

OLA Board Committees:

Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Committee
Indigenous Advisory Council
Nomination Committee

Operational Committees:

Advocacy Committee
Library As Place Committee
Anti-Racism Committee
Copyright Committee
Mentoring Committee
Awards Committee
Special Libraries Committee
Super Conference Planning Team

Other Committees:

OPLA Best Bets Committee
OPLA Child and Youth Services Committee
OPLA Research and Evaluation Committee
OPLA Community Led Libraries Committee
Marketing Libraries Think Tank Committee
OPLA Reader's Advisory Committee
OSLA Teaching Librarian Editorial Board

Advocacy Work

Save Our School Libraries

Since launching *Save Our School Libraries* in June 2024, we've heard from people across the province who have been championing school libraries — from collecting [petition](#) signatures to raising this issue with school boards and parent councils. Thank you to everyone who has helped spread the message and keep school libraries top of mind in conversations about student success and literacy achievement. To date, our petition has collected 5,641 signatures. We continued to engage the Ministry of Education throughout 2025 and look forward to building on this work.

To learn more and lend your support visit the [Save Our School Libraries webpage](#).

Ontario Public Library Week (OPLW)

For Ontario Public Library Week 2025, OLA and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries went on a roadshow, touring OPLW events throughout the province and providing support to libraries as they engaged their local representatives and communities. Through this, we hoped to strengthen relationships between libraries and their municipalities, focus on local advocacy efforts, and to recognize libraries as essential social infrastructure. Thank you to the following libraries for welcoming us: Midland, Orillia, Barrie, Niagara Falls, Grimsby, Burlington, Brampton, and Guelph.

Thinking Ahead: Consider hosting an OPLW event in 2026! OLA would be happy to provide guidance and support.



Education Events

RA in a Day

April 29, 2025 | Deep Dive into New Genres – Explore the Unfamiliar

OCULA Spring Conference

May 7, 2025 | Under Whose Authority? Power and Purpose in Academic Libraries

Digital Odyssey

June 9, 2025 | Survival Skills: Exploring Solutions for Tech Challenges in a Shifting World

Library as Place

June 18-19, 2025 | Beyond the Blueprint: Problem Solving Strategies for Library Space Design

OHLIA Conference

October 23, 2025 | Unscripted: Adaptive & Accessible Instruction in Health Libraries

Child & Youth Services Expo

November 5, 2025 | Courage, Connection, Community

Golden Opportunity

November 10, 2025 | Older Adult Library Programming

Marketing Libraries Think Tank

November 13, 2025 | Flexing Your Marketing Muscle

Copyright Symposium

November 19 & 27, December 4 & 11 | Speaker Series



Member Engagement

Member engagement opportunities create space for OLA members to learn, network, and celebrate within the library world. Through in-person and online events, OLA's continuing education and programming offers takeaways applicable to the broader library community.

Tours

Number of special library tours: 13

Most popular tours of the year:

1. Toronto Symphony Orchestra Library
2. National Ballet of Canada Archives
3. Robertson Davies Library (Massey College)

"The library tours have been, by far, my favourite part of being an OLA member. I've learned so much, gotten to see spaces I would not have otherwise, and also gained a lot of knowledge about resources available in Toronto that I share with students. Every person that's been the host for a tour has been interesting, and passionate and a delight to listen to, and have always exceeded my expectations..." - Tour Attendee

ONLibChats

Number of ONLibChats: 24

Most popular sessions of the year:

1. Marketing Libraries Think Tank: Libraries & Social Media
2. Navigating Tariffs: Impacts on Library Resources and Services
3. So You're Finished School, Now What

This year, OLA hosted a variety of ONLibChats, which provided libraries the opportunity to engage with and learn from one another through connection and knowledge-sharing. Sessions ranged from professional development and navigating change to censorship and advocacy.

School Library Learning Portal

This year, OSLA council hosted four School Library Connect sessions as part of a new initiative designed to inspire, motivate and engage its members through the OSLA Learning Portal. These virtual events are designed for school library professionals to network, share, ask questions, and celebrate the incredible impact school libraries have on our communities.

2025 OLA Award Winners

Ontario Library Association President's Award for Exceptional Achievement

Anastasia Shawnoo, Kettle and
Stony Point First Nation Public
Library

OLA Archival and Preservation Achievement Award

Leeds and the Thousand
Islands Archives, Leeds and
the Thousand Islands Public
Library

OLA Technical Services Award

Lorraine Gordon & Sherri
Bennewies, Stratford Public
Library

OLA Media and Communications Award

White Coat, Black Art, CBC
Radio and Hamilton Public
Library

Larry Moore Distinguished Service Award

Johanna Gibson-Lawler,
Greater Essex County District
School Board

OLITA Technology Advancing Libraries Award

Technical Services Team,
Lincoln-Pelham Public Library

OSLA Teacher Librarian of the Year Award

Johanna Gibson-Lawler, Greater
Essex County District School
Board

OSLA Award for Special Achievement

Lynn Goodwin, Halton District
School Board

OSLA School Library Professional of the Year Award

Library Services Team, Near
North District School Board

OSLA Administrator of the Year Award

Rosemary Caruso, Makwendam
Public School, Halton District
School Board

OPLA Lifetime Achievement Award

Andrea Cecchetto, Markham
Public Library

OCULA Award for Special Achievement

Yanli Li, Wilfrid Laurier University

Ken Haycock Award for Promoting Librarianship

Susan Haigh, Canadian
Association of Research
Libraries

OLA Les Fowlie Intellectual Freedom Award

Annie McClelland, Book and
Periodical Council

ABO-Franco Le Prix Micheline-Persaud

Véronique Caron-Biron, Émilie
Leblanc, École élémentaire
publique Marie-Curie

OLBA W.J. Robertson Medallion

Karthi Rajamani, Pembroke
Public Library

OHLIA Lifetime Achievement Award

Lori Anne Oja, University of
Toronto - Health Science
Information Consortium of
Toronto

OHLIA Outstanding Achievement Award

Amanda Ross-White, Queen's
University

OPLA James Bain Medallion

Adrian Graham, Springwater
Township Public Library Board

OLBA Joyce Cunningham Award

McKellar Public Library Board

2025 OPLA Spring & Library Building Winners

2025 OPLA Children's or Youth Services Librarian of the Year Award

Danielle Big Canoe Snake, Rama First Nation Public Library

2025 OPLA Advocacy in Action: Excellence in Children's or Teen Services Award

Audrey Kennington, Barrie Public Library

2025 OPLA Leadership in Adult Readers' Advisory Award

Laurie Prentice, Waterloo Public Library

2025 OLA New Library Building Award

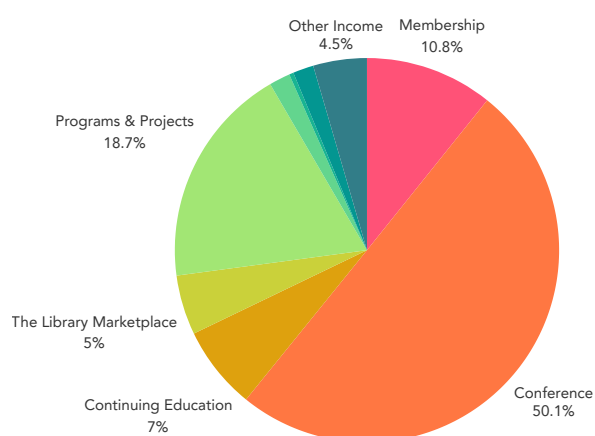
Coulson Family Bracebridge Library



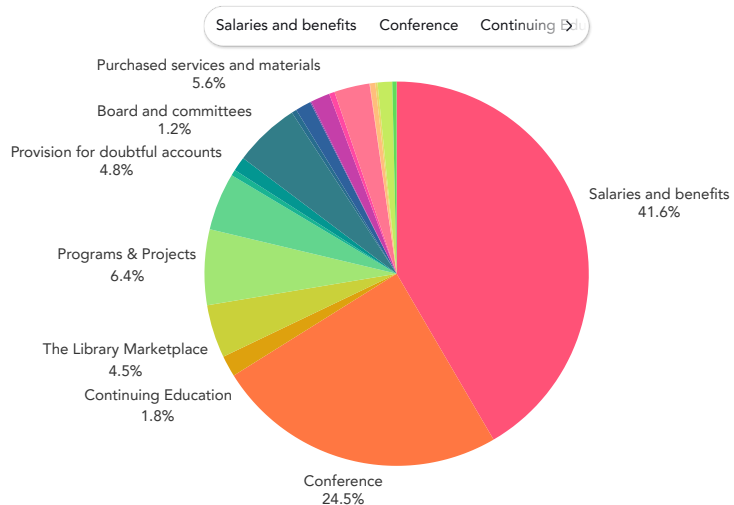
Exterior views showing all the principal facades of the building

Overview of Financial Report

2025 OLA Revenues



2025 OLA Expenditures



Read the OLA Financial Statements [here](#).

Our Staff

Executive Director
Michelle Arbuckle



Deputy Director
Dr. Sabrina Saunders



Director of Education
Emily Burns

Director of Forest of Reading® & Logistics
Meredith Tutching



Director of Member Engagement
Melissa Macks

Advocacy & Research Officer
Lily Kwok

Financial Analyst
Divya Annamreddy



Training & Event Producer
Gina Freitag

Communications Officer
Laurel McLeod

Marketing & Member Relations Specialist
Helen Chevreau



Association Management System Analyst
Esteban Dorado-Troughton

Project Assistant
Gabriel Holt

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