

President's Message:

LITA Forever

Andrew K. Pace

I was warned when I started my term as LITA president that my time at the helm would seem fleeting in retrospect, and I didn't believe it. I should have. I suppose most advice of that sort falls on deaf ears—advice to children about growing up, advice to newlyweds, advice to new parents. Some things you just have to experience. Now I am left with that feeling of having worked very hard while not accomplishing nearly enough. It's time to buy myself some more time.

My predecessor, Mark Beatty, likes to jokingly introduce himself in ALA circles as "LITA has-been" in reference to his role as LITA past-president. I say jokingly because he and I both know it is not true. Not only does the past-president continue in an active role on the LITA board and executive committee, the past-president has the daunting task of acting as the division's financial officer. Just as Mark knows well the nature of this elected (but still volunteer) commitment, so Michelle Frisque, my successor this July, knows that the hard work started as vice-president/ president-elect has two challenging years ahead.

Being elected LITA president is for all intents and purposes a three-year term with shifting responsibilities. Add to this the possibility of serving on the board beforehand, and it's likely that one could serve less time for knocking over a liquor store. I'm joking, of course—there's nothing punitive about being a LITA officer; it's as rewarding as it is challenging.

Neither is this intended to be a self-congratulatory screed as my last hurrah in print as LITA president. I've referred repeatedly to the grassroots success of LITA's board, interest groups, dedicated committees, and engaged volunteers. The flatness of our division is often emulated by others. I thoroughly enjoy engagement with the LITA membership, face-to-face and virtual recruitment of new members and volunteers, and group meetings to discuss moving LITA forward. I love that LITA is fun.

Fun and enjoyment, coupled with my dedication

to the profession that I love, is why I plan to make the most of my time, even as a has-been. All those meetings, all that bureaucracy? Well, believe it or not, I like the bureaucracy—process works when you learn to work the process—and all those meetings have actually created some excellent feedback for the LITA board. Changes in ALA, changes in the membership, and changes suggested by committees and interest groups all suggest . . . guess what? Change.

"Change" has been a popular theme these days. I'm in that weird minority of people who does not believe that people don't like to change. I think if the ideas are good, if the destination is worthwhile, then change is possible and even desirable. I'm always geared up for change, for learning from our mistakes, for asking forgiveness on occasion and for permission even less.

This is a long-winded way of saying that I think LITA is ready for some change. Change to the board, change to the committees and interest groups, and changes to our interactions with LITA and ALA staff. I think ALA and the other divisions are anxious for change as well, and I feel confident that LITA and its membership can help, even while we change ourselves. Don't ask me today what the details of these changes are. All I can say is that I will be there for them, help see them through, and will be there on the other side to assess which changes worked and which didn't.

One thing I hope does not change is the passion and dedication of the leaders, volunteers, and members of this great organization. I only hope that our ranks grow, even in times of financial uncertainty. LITA provides a valuable network of colleagues and friends—this network is always valuable, but it is indispensable in times of difficulty. For many, LITA represents a second or third divisional membership, but for networking and collegial support, I think we are second to none.

I titled my previous column "LITA Now." I think it's safe for me to say now, "LITA Forever."

Andrew K. Pace (pacea@oclc.org) is LITA President 2008/2009 and Executive Director, Networked Library Services at OCLC Inc. in Dublin, Ohio.