FROM THE PRESIDENT

ALLISON GRUBBS

Hello and welcome to the Fall edition of the *Florida Libraries* journal. Thank you for allowing me the wonderful opportunity to serve as your President. In fact, thankfulness is the theme of today's message. As the weather grows cooler, and we snuggle down into our warmer clothes, blankets, and (for some lucky few) by a fireplace, I hope we all take some time to contemplate that for which we are thankful. Gratitude is not a passive endeavor, but an active force which shapes how we lead, how we serve, and how we connect with one another. In the context of libraries, thankfulness becomes a lens through which we see the immense value of our profession, the dedication of our colleagues, and the trust of the communities we serve.

As we all are all keenly aware, libraries are not simply a repository of books, but also pillars of democracy. They safeguard intellectual freedom, nurture curiosity, and provide equitable access to knowledge. Gratitude for libraries reminds me that our work is not merely administrative but rather a moral commitment to uphold equity and access for all.

Speaking of our work, I am incredibly grateful for the library workers who are the heartbeat of our association. Your dedication inspires me to lead with humility. As president, I see myself not as an authority figure but as a steward ensuring you, as library professionals, have the recognition, resources, and support you deserve. Some of that support comes through partnerships which allow libraries to thrive; partnerships with schools, universities, local governments, nonprofits, and businesses. I am so thankful for the collaborations that keep us open to new ideas and which strengthen our ability to serve Floridians in meaningful ways.

How do we build these collaborations? Through advocacy, which is central to FLA's mission. Advocacy requires persistence, diplomacy, and courage. Gratitude in advocacy reminds us that progress is not achieved by a single leader but by a chorus of voices united in purpose. That purpose allows us to constantly evolve to meet the needs of our communities. Speaking of community, the Florida Library Association itself is a vibrant network of professionals, advocates, and supporters. I am thankful for the board members who dedicate countless hours to governance and strategy, the committee members who guide initiatives with passion and expertise, and the overall membership, whose diverse perspectives ensure our association reflects the richness of Florida itself.

From digital collections to makerspaces, from virtual programming to AI-driven tools, the landscape of information services is dynamic. Gratitude for innovation fuels optimism and reminds me that libraries are not relics of the past but laboratories of the future, built to be deeply personal spaces where lives are changed. I know my life has changed for the better due to the libraries I interacted with from my childhood through today.

On a personal level, thankfulness sustains me in moments of challenge. Leadership can be demanding, filled with difficult decisions and competing priorities. Yet gratitude transforms these challenges into opportunities. Thankfulness is not naïve optimism; it is a discipline that reframes obstacles as stepping stones. As president of the Florida Library Association, I believe thankfulness is more than a personal virtue, it is a collective practice. It shapes how we lead, how we serve, and how we envision the future of libraries in Florida. In embracing gratitude, we not only acknowledge what has been given to us but also commit ourselves to giving back. Thankfulness is the foundation of leadership, the heartbeat of service, and the guiding light of our association.

As I reflect on my role, I am filled with gratitude—gratitude for the privilege of serving, for the resilience of libraries, and for the promise of a future where knowledge and community continue to flourish across Florida.

Allison Grubbs

ALLISON GRUBBS
FLA PRESIDENT, 2025-26