

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## OVERDUE FOR FUN

by Jorge Perez, Presented on May 17, 2024 at the conclusion of the 2024 Annual Conference



Now is the perfect moment to unveil our theme for this upcoming year: "Overdue for Fun: Celebrating Libraries and Ourselves." Picture extending the joy you're experiencing at this conference into the next year. It's a time for us to rejoice in both us and our profession. Joy is long overdue, and it's time to embrace it.

I've achieved significant milestones in my personal professional journey. With over two decades of experience as a librarian, I reflect on my early days as a newbie librarian attending my inaugural FLA conference around 2006 or 2007. Back then, the idea of becoming FLA president seemed beyond reach. Yet, here I stand, indebted to the guidance of numerous mentors and colleagues within FLA who have propelled me forward. Today, as I celebrate this achievement, I urge you to contemplate your own victories and celebrate them. Let's infuse this year with a spirit of celebration and enjoyment.

My time as Vice President has offered profound lessons, particularly in navigating challenges. It's easy to become trapped in adversity, fixating on the negatives propagated by distressing headlines and narratives affecting our colleagues and profession. Yet, amidst the chaos, I've discovered moments of invincibility, contentment, and security, even in the absence of solutions. This revelation is simple yet profound: we can embrace joy amidst our fears, coexisting with our struggles.

Our keynote speaker this year imparted a powerful message about our shared human response to fear and failure, emphasizing our innate capacity for connection, healing, and revitalizing our creative energies. We possess the resilience to stand united.

Here's what I know to be unequivocal truths:

- Librarians and library workers embody strength and resilience.
- Our passion for our work is unwavering.
- We are here to stay, committed to serving our communities.
- Our profession possesses a rich history and a robust association.
- Fun is integral to our culture.
- We deserve to revel in joy.

Let's affirm these truths and continue to uphold the values that define us, embracing the joy inherent in our journey.

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## Incoming President's Message

Coinciding with our challenges, we can reconnect with our joy—the joy of celebrating our awesome profession, and the joy of finding comfort in our community of peers. It's in our selfless nature to seldom pause and acknowledge our accomplishments and the profound impact of our work on our communities, whether we serve as public or academic librarians. Rarely do we take a moment to say to ourselves, "I deserve to celebrate." I firmly believe that if we embrace this time for reflection with joy and lightheartedness, our mindset of 'surviving' will evolve into 'thriving'. While there's still much to accomplish, let's remember to infuse our efforts with fun. This is our year!

I want to share five action items for us to consider and guide us in our self-celebration going into this year:

1. Revisit the foundations of our profession. It can be easy to get lost in the noise; I'm the first to plead guilty here. However, staying grounded in our professional ethics and values is crucial, especially during challenging times. When the world around us seems chaotic or uncertain, maintaining our strong moral compass will provide the best guide for our actions and decisions. Revisiting the foundations of our profession can bring clarity, purpose, and direction to move forward in a centered way.

2. Let's reflect on our Successes. Reflection is usually something that we skip over or rarely mindfully integrate into our daily lives. Have a conversation with a colleague about tough topics and experiences. Journal. Create a list of projects and techniques that have been successful. Reflecting on what has worked brings us balance. These practices create distance from negativity and assist in bringing out the best you in any situation.

3. Tell Your Story. Many people do not fully understand the breadth of responsibilities that librarians undertake, or the educational background required to enter the profession. We know that we play a vital role in society, far beyond simply organizing books. We have a calling to make folks aware of this. During library events, presentations and orientations, let's highlight what we do. Share your story. What made you go into librarianship? Share the why of what you do to enlighten elected officials and community members.

4. Become Involved. Getting involved in professional library organizations can take many forms, from attending conferences and workshops to volunteering on committees, contributing to publications, or participating in advocacy efforts. By actively engaging within our professional community, you can stay informed, expand your network, and contribute to the advancement of the library profession. Please consider becoming more active with FLA.

5. Mentor and Build Relationships. We all have something to offer others from our experience, regardless of the length of our career. Seasoned librarians can pair with recent graduates to provide mutual fresh perspectives, insights into emerging trends, and opportunities for learning and growth for both parties. Reach out to a new hire. Create an internal program that fosters connection and growth. Building a strong support network strengthens the fabric of our professional community and creates a sense of belonging for our colleagues.

I invite you to have fun! Be corny. Goofy. Let's lean into our stereotypes. Wear your hair in a bun with a pencil sticking out. Wear a cardigan. Show those cats. Read more books. Shush people randomly. Shush people that annoy us. Geek out please! I know we are more than books but for today let's laugh while we do our good work.

FLA Committees will be spearheading interactive activities throughout the year. Please look out for those.

We are committed to our craft and assisting our communities. While current times bring challenges, our passion also provides strength and purpose to persevere and make a difference, no matter the obstacles we face. Our determination is stronger than ever. I invite you to celebrate yourself, your colleagues, your association, your profession, and your communities. It is time to tell your story. It is time to tell *our* story.

