

# President's Column

by Matt Todd

**M**erriam-Webster's *College Dictionary* defines "president" as "an official chosen to preside over a meeting or assembly" or "the chief officer of an organization (as a corporation or institution) usually entrusted with the direction and administration of its policies."

After a long day of presiding over the Virginia Library Association, I often like to shake up a nice martini and contemplate the state of our profession and our state association. Despite what you may have gleaned from James Bond films (more on that later), martinis are not made with vodka. Martinis are made with gin—according to the venerable *Savoy Cocktail Book*, it should be Plymouth Gin—shaken over ice and served with a thin slice of lemon zest. This is a perfect recipe for the contemplation of librarianship and its role in the life of our commonwealth, and the state of our association.

The last year has been one of tremendous change and development for the Virginia Library Association—change that I hope has been for the better, and development that has positioned the association for further successes in the years to come. I am pleased to report on some of the highlights of VLA's development and successes of 2010–2011.

Perhaps the most noteworthy change was the hiring of a new executive director to fill the place vacated by Linda Hahne, who retired after fourteen years in the position. After a careful search process, the Executive Committee was pleased

to retain the services of Lisa Varga as executive director. Varga brings a great deal of enthusiasm, innovative thinking, and facility with new and emerging technologies; a lively sense of humor; and, most of all, a devotion to the work of the association and service to its members.

One particularly notable achievement was the award of a National

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Leadership grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). VLA partnered with Liberty's Promise, a nonprofit organization working with immigrant youth, to pursue this opportunity, which yielded a considerable financial benefit to the association. The grant, of which VLA will act as administrator, will help to place young immigrants in library internships with the goal of serving communities, building skills, and introducing the library profession to new Americans.

Our advocacy activities continued apace, with a well-represented Virginia delegation at National Library Legislative Day on Capitol Hill in May and the adoption of a robust, concise Legislative Agenda by the VLA Council in June. Furthering our advocacy ef-

forts, libraries from around the commonwealth once again participated in Snapshot Virginia in April, gathering data, photos, and commentary to capture one day in the life of Virginia's libraries. Results of this effort, found at <http://snapshotvirginia.org/>, form a valuable archive for telling our story to legislators, policy-makers, and stakeholders. Finally, contributions from institutional members (public libraries and their Friends) continue to provide the funding base for legislative activities.

Other developments were structural: an enthusiastic group of new members successfully petitioned the Executive Committee to create the New Members Round Table Forum and launched almost immediately into developing programming and activities around the state. Look for more from the NMRT Forum at the VLA Annual Conference! The association's overall structure was streamlined somewhat, formally abolishing defunct committees, editing the VLA Manual to reflect current practice, disbanding the Ad Hoc Technology Committee and absorbing its work into a reformed Publications Committee, and formally assigning the webmaster responsibilities to the executive director.

Speaking of the webpage, the VLA web presence ([www.vla.org](http://www.vla.org)) underwent a thorough housecleaning and moved entirely to a new platform. Communication strategy was revised, phasing out the old newsletter and adopting an exclusively electronic delivery of association news. VLA also established

a social media presence with a Facebook account—please be sure to “like” us!

The work of sustaining and maintaining a professional association resides not only in present accomplishments, but also in planning for and anticipating future successes. To that end, the Executive Committee in September adopted a three-year Strategic Plan defining the association’s goals in membership service, advocacy, professional development, association-wide communications, and organizational structure. You can view the plan on the VLA website.

As ever, VLA also mounted two successful and well-attended conferences. The Paraprofessional Forum welcomed its members to Richmond in May for two days of renewal, refreshment, and focus on success. As I write this, the VLA Annual Conference Committee is

finalizing plans for what it projects as “the best conference ever” in Portsmouth. An exciting agenda of speakers, preconferences, and concurrent sessions promises an engaging and rewarding experience. This year VLACRL once again will present a “conference within a conference” with two days of dedicated tracks. We are also pleased to welcome back the Virginia Association of Law Librarians as partners in the 2011 conference. Three scholarships will be awarded to library staff pursuing master’s degrees in library and information studies. As always, the popular “basket” raffle provides the primary fiscal support of a new generation of librarians.

So I raise my martini glass to you, the librarians and library staff of our great commonwealth. It has been a profound pleasure and signal honor to serve as your

president, and a great privilege to work in this capacity with and for Virginia’s library community.

Since this is a library column, I thought it best to close with a quote from a book (and I did promise to get back to Bond). Bond’s famous film “vodka martini, shaken not stirred” is a departure from Ian Fleming’s novels. In *Casino Royale* (first published in 1953), Bond orders “a dry martini. One. In a deep champagne goblet.... Three measures of Gordon’s gin, one of vodka, half measure of Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it’s ice-cold, then add a large thin slice of lemon peel. Got it?”

*Casino Royale* can be got at your local library at Dewey 823.914 or PR6056 L34 for LC users. Oh, and the *Savoy Cocktail Book*? It’s still in print, LC: TX951, Dewey: 641.854. Cheers! 

SWING (the Southwest Virginia Information Network Group) is now...

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