

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

New Year—New Initiatives for the Virginia Library Association

by *Connie Gilman*

It is the second week of 2012 as I sit and write my first President's Column. The beginning of a new year appeals to me because it signifies all the possibilities that are to come—a fresh start. With the end of the 2011 conference, I was reminded of the opportunity for a fresh start for the Virginia Library Association with the new slate of officers. But this transition is only the beginning, because the direction of VLA only coalesces into visions and goals at the Executive Board Retreat.

The officers met December 1–2 in Natural Bridge. During the meetings, a number of things were discussed and adopted such as the 2012 budget; *VLA Manual* changes, including the addition of the New Members Round Table Forum; formally assigning the webmaster responsibilities to the executive director; and, most important, our plan for the next year. In 2011, the officers adopted a strategic plan that will focus the activities and resources of VLA from 2012 through 2015. This plan will also be the basis for setting VLA's annual Designated Agenda in order to ensure we are focused on long-term goals.

Virginia Library Association's Strategic Plan was the idea of John Moorman, president of the association in 2010, and he took the responsibility for writing the first draft. The Executive Council tweaked the draft during 2011 and then accepted the final format

at the 2011 retreat. I hope that it will be accepted by the VLA Council at the January 2012 meeting. The plan that will go to council follows:

... the officers adopted a strategic plan that will focus the activities and resources of VLA....

New Age: New Library Virginia Library Association Strategic Plan 2012–2015

The Virginia Library Association members include libraries, library staff, trustees, friends of libraries, and others interested in the provision of quality library service throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Because of our diverse membership, the Virginia Library Association will focus our efforts on:

Providing excellent membership service:

The Virginia Library Association (VLA) office will respond promptly to information requests and member enquiries. Association officers and members of VLA Council will assist in communicating with members and addressing member-

ship concerns. Innovative technology will be employed to enhance better online access to information and enable efficiencies in information collection and dissemination.

Providing excellent advocacy efforts:

The VLA Legislative Committee will coordinate the association's advocacy efforts in communicating critical library issues to our elected representatives, on a state and federal level. VLA will continue to support, through public library institutional dues, the position of a VLA legislative liaison. An annual Legislative Agenda emphasizing library priorities will be adopted by council at its June meeting.

Providing excellent conferences:

VLA will coordinate and support both the annual conference and the paraprofessional conference. Conference programs and services will be evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that conferences meet the needs of membership and are a fiscally sound investment of association funds. VLA will reach out to neighboring state associations to promote conference programs.

Providing excellent continuing education opportunities:

VLA will support continuing education opportunities for all members. VLA will work through the Continuing Education Committee

to increase educational opportunities, collaborate with the Professional Development Committee to ensure continued financial support for education and training, and support the Leadership Development Forum in the biennial Leadership Academy. VLA will work with the Library of Virginia, member libraries, and other partners to expand continuing education opportunities.

Providing excellence in communications:

The VLA website will continue to be a major focus for association-wide communications. Units within VLA will be encouraged to place information on the website. Formats of VLA publications will be regularly examined to ensure their financial viability and the widest availability to membership. The value and effectiveness of all

communication modes will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Providing excellence in organizational structure:

VLA will evaluate and assess its own organizational structure to ensure that association units and committees serve and reflect the needs of the membership. Support will be given to units and committees within VLA to enhance their services and programs. New association members will be encouraged to become active within VLA. VLA will strengthen statewide knowledge of the value of the association to increase its membership, assuring the continued financial viability of the association.

This strategic plan provides broad goals, which then guide the development of the annual Designated

Agenda as developed by the Executive Council and presented to the VLA Council in January. This annual agenda then guides the VLA Council's actions in the work of committees and focus groups. The Designated 2012 Agenda for VLA is available on our website, www.vla.org.

It is a new year. It is a fresh start. I am honored to be your president and to work with so many excellent library employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is now time to "roll up our sleeves" and make our strategic goals a reality. There are plenty of opportunities for any and all members to become involved in the various committees and programs of the Virginia Library Association. I heartily encourage you to do so, because it enriches the organization as well as your professional and personal life. **VL**