

President's Column

by Kevin Smith

At the beginning of this New Year I cannot help but think of David Bowie's song "Changes." The lyrics "Ch-ch-ch-changes, turn and face the strain, Ch-ch-changes..." echo in my mind more and more as each day passes. Every day those of us in the library profession are presented with something new—opportunities for growth, experimentation, and exploration. But this has been the nature of libraries since the beginning of recorded knowledge. I am sure many of you have seen the quote on T-shirts or Facebook, "Change is good, you go first." With that in mind I am always impressed with libraries that are brave enough to be the first to make changes in traditional library service or be the first to try out new things like open source information management systems. Kudos to everyone who has embarked on an adventure like Evergreen (the open source system developed by the Georgia PINES consortium).

Change has been a prevalent topic of discussion in VLA, particularly with the 2014 conference titled "Agents of Change." Change is also the major theme in this year's Paraprofessional Conference, which will focus on the ever-changing roles of libraries and how social communication is changing the way we serve our patrons. In the last couple of years we have seen tremendous change in public library administrations as longtime directors have retired and new leaders have come onboard, bringing their insights and experiences into Virginia's libraries. Our catalogers have had to cope with changes in

cataloging rules with the implementation of Resource Description and Access (RDA) in 2013. E-books continue to replace print, and digital periodicals are now available through services like Zinio. Academic libraries continue to morph into information/learning commons and, in both public and college libraries, circulation and reference desks are now being replaced by one single service point.

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While I contemplate the changes that abound, I cannot help but remember one great change in the last century that has had a lasting effect on the Commonwealth and the communities we serve. In 1942 the General Assembly appropriated \$50,000 to encourage the formation of public libraries at the regional, county, and city level—thus, the beginning of State Aid! The amount has increased over 72 years and the establishment of the 91 public library systems throughout Virginia was a direct result of this positive change in legislation. As this year's legislative session wraps up and budget bills are debated, let us hope our legislators continue to value the role of libraries and the positive change we make in the lives of our patrons and students.

Change can be scary, but we know it is inevitable and a necessary part of any living organism

or organization. As stated in S. R. Ranganathan's fifth law of library Science, "A library is a growing organism."

With all of the changes we are experiencing one thing remains the same—people are still using libraries. Circulation statistics for printed materials may steadily be dropping but door counts and program attendance are up. The one constant in the dynamic world of libraries is our unchanging mission to serve as institutions of learning and centers of information.

Finally, speaking of "change," VLA is doing very well financially. Presently, Institutional Memberships have generated \$21,000 of our \$40,000 goal, and Organizational Memberships have brought in \$4,250 of our targeted \$5,000. In addition, our webinar series of programs is generating a significant amount of revenue that is assisting with the cost of this year's annual conference. The Executive Committee and I are very grateful to those who have been diligent in renewing their membership!

Calendar updates

Here are a few dates to keep in mind: (1) National Library Legislative Day will be May 5 & 6, 2014 in Washington, D.C.; (2) the VLA Paraprofessional Conference will be May 18–20, 2014 in Richmond; and (3) in the fall there will be a special peer-reviewed issue of *Virginia Libraries* with articles submitted by members of the VLA College and Research Libraries Chapter (VLACRL). 