

ESSAY/COMMENTARY

Peace, Love, and Libraries: A Letter to VLA's Membership

Jessica Scalph

In this letter to the Virginia Library Association membership at the end of her term as President, the author shares highlights and initiatives from the year. These include: the annual conference with the theme of *Peace, Love, Libraries* and its connection to libraries as a place of community discussion; the new affiliate membership model that VLA introduced this year; establishment of the Librarians of Color Forum; and the name change of the Diversity & Inclusion Forum to LGBTQIA+. The letter also describes upcoming changes to the *Virginia Libraries* journal; three programs by VLACRL; programming successes from the CaTS Forum; a professional associates survey project; regional programs; the New Members Round Table mentorship program; VLA manual changes regarding VALLA program requirements; and a letter from VLA countering Macmillan's planned ebook platform changes.

Keywords: libraries; community; discussion; professional associations



Photo of Jessica Scalph.

Letter

Dear VLA Colleagues,

I have been involved professionally with VLA since the early 2000's. VLA has afforded me many opportunities to grow as a librarian and as a person. This year as VLA president has been a tremendous learning experience for me. I have appreciated this opportunity that you all, as members, have allowed me.

I am very grateful that I have received the support, advice and counsel from our phenomenal executive committee, Todd Elliot (Past President), Jennifer Resor-Whicker (Vice President-President Elect), Adrian Whicker (2nd Vice President), Cori Biddle (Treasurer), Kayla Payne (Secretary) and Samantha Duncan (ALA Chapter Councilor). Lisa Varga as Executive Director has been my first resource for most of my daily dealings as president and I am very grateful for her assistance and guidance. Katie Kalil, this year's conference chairperson, has done a wonderful job bringing together the many details and considerations that go into planning a conference.

Peace, Love, Libraries is the theme for the conference this year (Oct 23–25, at The Main in Norfolk, VA). The conference committee did an amazing job planning this conference and assisting me with devising a theme that consolidates my thoughts on the role of libraries in our community. In my view, libraries should promote peace in our communities by offering a safe place for discussion, communication and

listening. Libraries throughout our state have provided opportunities to discuss controversial issues within the framework of respect and civility. We will have many fine examples of engaging sessions at our conference and it was very exciting to see how the presenters implemented the theme throughout their proposals.

Throughout this past year we have been working on various initiatives. The vision of an Affiliate Membership option for VLA was brought to reality through the work of the Ad Hoc Membership Restructuring Committee: Lisa Varga, Lisa Lee Broughman, Matt Todd, Nan Carmack and Cori Biddle. As a result we have grown from 900 members last year to over 4,298 members as of early September 2019. These new members present an opportunity for VLA to grow by bringing their new ideas and initiatives.

VLA also established the Librarians of Color Forum. Joslyn Dixon was instrumental in getting this group off the ground and we look forward to regional workshops and future conference proposals from this forum. The Diversity & Inclusion Forum has changed its name to the LGBTQIA+ Forum and we are seeking participation throughout our membership. There will be more information on opportunities to participate in this group.

Our journal, *Virginia Libraries*, went to a digital platform in 2015. Currently the board is working on transferring the e-journal to a more user-friendly site <https://virginialibrariesjournal.org> and we look forward to that happening in the next few months.

VLACRL offered three exciting programs throughout the year. On May 1, 2019 they had a spring program entitled, "Libraries, Analytics and Student Privacy." The evaluations of this program were very positive. TILC (The Innovative Library Classroom) was held in June and the registration was filled in three hours. Colleagues presented on such varied topics as librarian-faculty collaborations, implementing escape rooms, source evaluation, and data management's role in information literacy. The VLACRL summer program "Project Outcome for Academic Libraries: Data for Impact and Improvement" was held on July 17th. Eric Ackermann, Head, Research Services and Library Assessment, Radford University, led the workshop for approximately 30 participants. During the annual VLA conference, VLACRL has also planned programming for their "Conference within a Conference," for a total of fourteen sessions and fifteen poster sessions.

The Collections and Technical Services Forum (CaTS) has had a successful year of programming and outreach. The Learning Lunches, held in each of the six regions, encouraged participation without much travel commitment. The

Collection Development Forum in Henrico brought out about 30 Collection minded staff from across the state for robust discussions and networking.

The Professional Associates Forum, through the leadership of Jeanne Scott, have sent surveys to our membership on various topics with the intention of utilizing the results for future planning of regional programs and conferences.

I attended a few of the many regional programs such as the Adult Programming Region 5 group, one of the three Presentation Academies offered by the Continuing Education Committee, and several TED style talks which involved various libraries sharing best practices for programming. We also had the ALA conference in DC this year and thanks to Lisa Varga, VLA set up a table and I had the opportunity to meet colleagues throughout the country.

The New Members Round Table (NMRT) mentorship program, successfully matched 40 participants (20 mentor/mentee pairs) this year. That is up from 22 participants (12 pairs) last year. Chelsea Seddon did a great job organizing and leading the mentor program.

We also updated the VLA manual with the assistance of Barbara Ferrara, the chair of the Continuing Education Committee, with revised requirements for VALLA (Virginia Library Leadership Academy). The manual now includes clearer guidelines regarding the purpose, logistics, participation criteria, and final project requirements. I feel that the future projects will be an excellent way for VALLA participants to give back to the VLA community.

This fall, VLA was asked by ALA to write a letter in support of the national organization's position regarding the publisher Macmillan's new e-book licensing model. This new model will limit a library to purchasing one copy upon release of a new title in e-book format. After an eight-week embargo, Macmillan would then allow additional copies of that title for sale to libraries. We wrote in support of ALA's position against this model and brought up additional points regarding digital content and how important it is to Virginia citizens to have free access to digital content through libraries.

In closing, I wanted to express how thankful I am for the opportunity to be VLA President. I have immensely enjoyed working with all of you this year and I look forward to seeing all of you at the VLA conference in Norfolk and at future VLA activities.

Jessica Scalph

2019 VLA President

Author Information

Jessica Scalph (JScalph@pwcgov.org) has been a professional librarian for over twenty years at the Prince William Public Library System. She is currently the Library Administrator for the Haymarket Gainesville Community library, where she has worked for four years. Jessica has been active in the Virginia

Library Association, for nineteen of those twenty years as a librarian. She has participated in the Intellectual Freedom and Region V committees, and represented VLA, at the ALA Council meetings, as the ALA Chapter Councilor for six years. Jessica has participated in several National Library Legislative Days and is currently the 2019 VLA President.

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