I stand in awe and deeply moved by the prophetic words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He had the ability to communicate substantive ideas each time he opened his mouth to speak. He was an advocate of equal opportunity and felt that education would always serve as the "equalizer" for creating OPPORTUNITY. As an avid reader and patron of the library, he felt that books and libraries were the instruments to be used for freeing the mind and creating that just and equitable opportunity.

If Dr. King were here today, and we wanted to hear words of inspiration and motivation to take us back to our homes for another few months, I wonder just what he would say?

In his charismatic, articulate and eloquent way,

He would probably say:

Thank you my dear friends of the Library Profession for giving me this opportunity to share a few words. I want to give back to you what your colleagues have given to me in the past, words of encouragement. That is why I don't mind sharing with you today.

Librarians, you are the keepers of our culture. I do not have to tell you that we are living in an age where information has literally become a matter of survival.

I wonder if you truly know and understand the depth, breath and magnitude of your ability to empower the citizenry of this country? Your impact extends from the child's first trip to the library and his first efforts to read, to the layperson trying to find information to complete or build a project for the home.

It is my belief, that you may have even underestimated your value to the student, the scholar, the researcher and the scientist.

You have power that you have not even begun to tap into!

And, in his humble and compassionate manner, he would probably add;

Bless your hearts darlings, because I know that you are now, more than ever, being called upon to wear multiple hats in your libraries.
As Librarians of the 21st century, you are being called upon to be teachers, storytellers, mediators, curriculum developers, fund-raisers, development officers, researchers, counselors, planners, managers, assessors, team members, problem-solvers, and computer-handypersons and men.

Wearing that many hats, will call for you to be alert, versatile and proficient in your interpersonal skills. Above all, strive to have a good sense of humor because you will need it with those you serve. Serve with humility because arrogance can be spotted a mile away.

In my heart of hearts, I know you are not compensated for your worth but you must continue to serve our communities with greater integrity and zeal than you have ever before. You "must involve everyone through alliances, teamwork, and diversity."

In addition, you must do community outreach to help build and rebuild communities wherever possible.

Dr. King would probably state further

Librarians, "You must lead by leading your colleagues to care deeply, by inspiring, and by persuading."

"You must become leaders with courage to change your workplaces so that they are inclusive and your resources are representative of all cultures.

And because our population is aging, and the numbers are increasing within the communities of the disabled, the homeless and the disenfranchised citizen groups, you must find ways to serve them as well.

You have an awesome task of recruiting and training new librarians to the profession because there is such a critical shortage. As I understand it the American Library Association Spectrum Initiative is leading the way in increasing the numbers.

Spectrum, Scholars, I love you dearly for your commitment and dedication to your newfound career.

But we need more Librarians with heart and soul. Those of you, who are seasoned professionals, have the responsibility to mentor your new colleagues and build on your professional legacy.

The events of September 11, 2001, have presented new challenges for you, and it is most imperative that you formulate strategies to act now. Remember that time and action are our greatest teachers. Take action after sober reflection. Learn from this bitter experience.

You can no longer have the attitude, "that you are just a librarian." Become a Library Professional with a drum major attitude and vision!
You cannot afford to be afraid to step out of your comfort zone for it is essential that you develop partnerships and collaborate with others, individually as well as institutionally. It does not matter what your specialty of librarianship may be; you are all interwoven into the fabric of your profession.

YOUR greatest challenge now is to find innovative and creative ways to expand your services. I warn you now; your pay may only come in the fact that you were successful in meeting the needs of those you serve. Your compensation may only come in the form of a spiritual and uplifting mountaintop experience. Accept and be recharged and renewed!

He would probably close by saying:

And now I extend to you my deepest and sincere blessings. Go back to your various communities and libraries because our world is a mere neighborhood.

Librarians, by making information accessible and timely, your impact on shaping our world is immeasurable. If you can remember, "we are all tied together, and whatever affects you directly, affects all of us indirectly."

Remember, the chance to act is today, because the time is now.

Thank you for listening, and continue to have not only a good day, but also a good life.