

From the Chair

The Next 50: A GODORT for All

Kian Flynn

I am writing this column, my first as GODORT chair, only a few weeks removed from attending the 2022 ALA Annual Conference in Washington DC, the first in-person ALA conference in over two years. As I reflect on my experience at the conference, I feel incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to attend informative and timely GODORT programs and reconnect with so many wonderful colleagues at our in-person social events, especially after years of virtual meetings.

After a weekend spent absorbing the terrific presentations from the distinguished faculty in our juried program, “Social Justice & the Kerner Report: the Consequences of Inaction,” which provided a stark reminder of the impact that government information can have and the importance of free and public access to it, and toasting to our 50th Anniversary at our annual Awards ceremony, which celebrated our history and welcomed new members to join us in writing the next 50 years of it, I left one Washington for the other Washington recharged and with renewed momentum and excitement for the year ahead.

In particular, I’m excited to build upon these themes that our Round Table addressed at the conference and through our other programming in the past few years.

Advocacy

While in DC it was hard to escape the monumental government documents that were being created just down the street from the convention center at all three branches of the US federal government: a landmark bipartisan gun safety bill, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, signed into law by President Biden, the explosive hearings of the US House Select Committee on the January 6th Attack at the US Capitol, and the 6-3 Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and its 50 years of precedent protecting Americans’ reproductive rights.

These events, in conjunction with the acute pressures libraries and library workers are facing across the country from efforts to regulate library content and ban books, underscored the important role that GODORT can play in connecting library workers across the association with the skills and resources to effectively advocate for their libraries with their elected representatives. The GODORT Chair’s program at the conference, “Beyond the Vote: Lessons in Civic Engagement and Advocacy,” was a great start, and I look forward to seeing GODORT continue to pursue this important work in the year ahead.

Community

The COVID-19 pandemic and the physical and social isolation it wrought has had a permanent impact on how each of us works and lives, and it will have a permanent impact on how and why we conduct our work and activities as a Round Table. One takeaway from this time has been the enduring importance and value of building community and our networks, and as a Round Table we can continue to be a welcoming space where library workers can find that community virtually and in-person.

I encourage everyone to join us for our bimonthly Friday Chats (schedule on our website) to stay connected with colleagues interested in government information. And as we move into a time that allows for more in-person events, GODORT will provide those opportunities as well in accordance with public health guidance. ALA Annual was a reminder that there are some key benefits of in-person connection that are hard to replicate in online settings.

Sustainability

We have all been through a very hard two years in our professional and personal lives, and as I reached out to our membership to recruit volunteers for our GODORT committees for this coming year, it became clear that many were feeling stretched thin at their jobs and without the bandwidth to take on leadership roles in our Round Table. In the year ahead, it will be a top priority to continue to provide our membership with professional development opportunities and support the meaningful work of GODORT without contributing further to the burnout that is inflicting our profession.

The past year has provided ample opportunity to reflect on the highlights and history of GODORT’s first 50 years and how different GODORT’s next 50 years may look. As we transition back to more in-person events, I look forward to welcoming new GODORT members to our Round Table and working with each of you to write this first chapter of our next 50 years.

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