

From the Chair

Midwinter/LibLearnX Round Up

Robbie Sittel

GODORT members and friends, I write this column in anticipation of coming together in person at the ALA Annual Conference for the first time in over two years. As we come together in June, we will have reasons to celebrate, reasons to rally, and reasons to grieve.

The last two years have been difficult for many in our community. The effects of the pandemic impacted us all in varying degrees and ways. Nationally, we are suffering a mental health crisis and the US is on the cusp of recording its millionth COVID death. The GODORT community has experienced its own set of losses over the last two years. Our community lost Kenya Flash, Tim Hartnett, Latanya Jenkins, Mary Redmond, and Anita Schiller. Though I did not know all of these individuals, what I learned of each in their passing is that they all built strong professional communities, had a strong passion for government information, served as mentors to many, and each left an indelible mark on friends, colleagues, and peers. I know their loss is felt by many in our membership and across the library and academic worlds.

The last twenty-four hours, let alone the last twenty-four months, have been filled with heavy news that ignites a fire in my belly and rallies me to be a better and stronger advocate for the causes I feel strongly about. Women's health and reproductive rights are under attack; the trans community's access to gender-affirming care is under attack; school and public libraries are under attack; higher education is under attack; democracy is under attack (sorry to be a Debbie Downer). Sometimes it feels like the world is crumbling around us. Still, this could be something of a golden hour for GODORT. We can seize the moment to battle disinformation, assist our librarian colleagues in finding and understanding proposed legislation, and teach our peers how to contact members of congress, comment on proposed rules, and speak at council or commission meetings. We understand how government works and how the information of the government strengthens our understanding of issues and policy. Now is a great time to remind people what GODORT is and how we can help them advocate for the causes they feel strongly about.

Despite the doom and gloom, there is much to celebrate. GODORT is 50 years old and we will be joined by many of our

founding members in celebrating our milestone. GODORT's membership is up, and we again have a councilor to represent us. Our committees are active and engaged in promoting government information and sharing the benefits of GODORT. And our 50th anniversary aligns with our first opportunity to convene in person in over two years and give us the occasion to celebrate each other and our award recipients while reflecting on our past and looking toward our future. Admittedly, I am immensely excited to see folks outside of Zoom. I cannot wait to ride the Metro, share a cocktail with friends, and see something historic. I make a point to visit a new monument, memorial, and historic site every time I visit Washington, DC. This year's new site will be the George Washington Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia, where we will have our 50th Anniversary Celebration and Awards Ceremony. If you have not registered to attend our celebration, do not wait any longer.

GODORT is making a strong showing at this year's annual conference with both formal and informal events. In addition to our 50th Celebration, we are hosting or co-hosting four conference programs—Getting to Know GODORT (GODORT 101), Economic Data with the Census Bureau and OECD, Beyond the Vote: Lessons for Advocacy and Civic Engagement, and Social Justice & The Kerner Report: The Consequences of Inaction. We will also come together for tours of libraries and will meet up in the OECD's rooftop lounge for happy hour. I hope to see many of you at any or all these events, where we can take a moment to grieve, rally, and celebrate.

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