

Submitted for the January 2009 Issue of ALA-APA's *Library Worklife*, Volume 6, No. 1

“How Would You Represent ALA-APA As President In 2010-2011 And Beyond?”

While it has been a long climb getting here, ALA-APA is poised to take off. Now that we are successfully graduating candidates from the Certified Public Library Administrators Program and are fast-tracking the Library Support Staff Certification Program, we need to support ALA-APA and keep it moving forward. I am dedicated to doing so with ALA and ALA-APA's staff and members.

ALA as a 501 c(3) organization can do many things for libraries and librarianship, but it cannot issue professional certifications to individuals. Nor can ALA lobby for library salaries, a deep concern for almost everyone in the profession. Few are as well-educated as the individuals who work in libraries though the monetary recompense seems far out of kilter with the degrees required or requested in job postings. In addition to being able to fulfill these roles that are important to us, ALA-APA as a 501 c(6) permits a venue for discussion on political candidates, something that was strongly desired by members during the recent election. For all of these reasons (and others), I feel strongly that ALA-APA is vital to the future of library employees and that it must continue.

I commend Jenifer Grady. It is not easy starting a program with limited financial and staffing support. As President, I will work to boost that support and in particular one of the key reasons for ALA-APA's existence: the advancement of libraries and library workers, especially the efforts to increase library salaries for traditionally underpaid library workers.

For the past 8 years, I have been the Project Manager for the National Book Festival, which annually features 70 authors and illustrators and gets 120,000 attendees. Its media reach is astonishing...there were 1.2 billion media impressions for the 2008 festival. The authors are high-profile individuals, who are popular and command respect from their peers. Among the more than 440 who have appeared at the festival since 2001 are Doris Kearns Goodwin, David McCullough, John Irving, Salman Rushdie, Geraldine Brooks, Patricia MacLachlan, R. L. Stine, Neil Gaiman, Rosemary Wells, Walter Dean Myers, Louis Sachar, Sharon Draper, Jerry Pinkney, Judith Ortiz Cofer and Bryan Collier. They are natural allies for libraries and library employees. I will tap these talented individuals to become our advocates with the public and private sectors for increasing the salaries of library staff and for raising the profile and status of the profession. They are a diverse group and can powerfully reinforce the message that we value diversity and that working in libraries is a “cool” career choice.

Money may be the mother's milk of politics, but we know for sure it's the mother's milk of libraries. We need it to keep our collections from growing stale and our services vibrant and responsive to our users. On an elemental level, we need it to keep the doors open, the lights lit, and the heating on and to get our salaries paid and our salary increases approved. These are perilous times economically (personally I cry a river every time I

open my latest 401(k) statement) and strong voices with lawmakers are essential. I have worked here at the Library of Congress for nearly 24 years, right across the street from the U.S. Capitol. As President, I pledge to you that I will use my experience on Capitol Hill and as a former member of ALA's Committee on Legislation and enlist others to work together in pursuing the passage of legislation to provide funding for libraries...whether they are in elementary and high schools, colleges and universities, or serving their local populations. I will advocate for libraries with national, state and local political leaders and work with ALA and its members relentlessly to ensure every potential piece of legislation that could provide support for libraries includes provisions for that support.

Jim Rettig has initiated a host of online opportunities that allow members the opportunity to become engaged with the organization. It's a relatively easy way to take advantage of the many training, discussion and networking opportunities that ALA offers. I will continue his efforts and expand them for staff who function in the wide variety of roles in our libraries.

Finally, I pledge that as president I will donate any honorarium received as President to ALA-APA and the Spectrum Scholarship fund. In addition, I will use the honorarium to provide conference scholarships for members who have never had a chance to share in the excitement, learning opportunities and personal contacts that make Annual Conferences such a valuable experience.

I ask for your vote for ALA and ALA-APA President.

Roberta Stevens