

# ***President's Message:***

## **Making an Impact in the Time That is Given to Us**

Rachel Vacek

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In an early chapter in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien, Frodo laments having found the one Ring and Gandalf tries to console him by saying, "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." This is one of my favorite quotes in the *Lord of the Rings* series because it inspires us to rise to the occasion and perform to the best of our abilities. It also implies that that we have a purpose to fulfill within a predetermined time period.

Although my term in office is three years, I'm only LITA President for one year. To set a vision and goals, establish a sense of urgency, generate buy-in, engage and empower the membership, implement sustainable changes, and remain positive and focused – all within one year while holding a full-time job – is challenging to say the least.

I've been very fortunate during my almost eight-year tenure at the University of Houston Libraries to participate in numerous professional development opportunities, lead change, and make a difference. Personal and professional growth has always been very important to me, and being in an environment that encourages me to become a better librarian, technologist, manager, and leader is not only helpful for my career, but also extremely rewarding on an intellectual level. LITA has benefited that training.

In today's library technology landscape, one of the many skills leaders need to possess is the ability to effect change. As LITA President, I have put many changes in motion and am happy with what I have accomplished, and proud of our Board and the members who volunteer to lead and effect change.

As I reflect over the past year, it's fair to say that LITA, despite some financial challenges, has had numerous successes and remains a thriving organization. Three areas – membership, education, and publications – bring in the most revenue for LITA. Of those, membership is the largest money generator. However, membership has been on a decline, a trend that's been seen across ALA for the past decade. In response, the Board, committees, interest groups, and many individuals have been focused on improving the member experience to retain current members and attract potential ones. With all the changes to the organization and leadership, LITA is on the road to becoming profitable again and will remain one of ALA's most impactful divisions.

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The Board has taken numerous steps to stabilize or reverse the decline in revenues that has resulted from a steady reduction in overall membership. At ALA Annual 2014, the Financial Advisory Committee was established to respond to recommendations from the Financial Strategies Task Force, adjusting the budget to make a number of improvements while planning for larger, more substantial changes.

In Fall 2014 we took steps to improve our communications by establishing the Communications & Marketing Committee and appointing a Social Media Manager and a Blog Manager. The blog and social media have seen a steady upward trajectory of engagement with over 27,000 blog views since September 2014 and over 13,300 followers on Twitter. These efforts help recruit and retain members, advertise our online education and programming, and increase attendance at conferences.

Over the past year, nine workshops and two web courses were offered, many of which sold out thanks to new marketing approaches. The Forum remains popular and has stellar programming and keynote speakers. Programs and workshops at ALA conferences are stronger than ever and continue to be well attended. Publications also remain strong. Although only three LITA Guides were published this year, partially due to a change in publishers, there are many more in the pipeline.

Finally, the search for a new Executive Director is underway, and with a new leader comes fresh ideas and perspectives. I am excited about LITA's future. The incoming Board, along with a new Executive Director, has an opportunity to make national and lasting impact as well as collaborate with outstanding librarians and staff in this division and across ALA. LITA's challenges and successes are shared amongst a dedicated team of volunteers, and together we've made significant changes. I believe that LITA members will continue to rise to the occasion and make incredible things happen with "the time that is given us." LITA is an amazing organization because of its members and their passion and dedication. I couldn't be prouder. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your president.