

*“In our democratic society, the library stands for hope, for learning, for progress, for literacy, for self-improvement and for civic engagement. The library is a symbol of opportunity, citizenship, equality, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, and hence, is a symbol for democracy itself.” Vartan Gregorian*

Dear OLA Community,

In the days and weeks since the election, (and certainly before), we have seen divided political discourse in our country. Whatever your political position may be personally, I believe we can acknowledge that deep divides have been exposed in our communities because of the inflammatory rhetoric and contentious campaigning of the last few months. The nation’s presidential election was one of many decisions in front of voters this November--we also heard their voices in response to local issues, a few of which involved Oregon libraries, as you know. As our mission states, the Oregon Library Association is here to “provide advocacy, education, leadership and collaboration to continually strengthen Oregon’s libraries and the communities we serve.” We will continue to work together to realize this mission.

Therefore, I think it is appropriate to take a moment to reaffirm and celebrate the [core values](#) that guide us as members of the library community. I also think it is important to say that, as this is the week of Thanksgiving, I am grateful for a professional solidarity with each of you for the values that we share, including honoring diversity, intellectual freedom, education, and social responsibility.

A library is a place of welcoming and safety to all members of its community. We feel a strong sense of ethical duty to serve all our patrons fairly, to help them learn, grow, participate in our programs, and take advantage of the resources we can provide. By doing so, we foster a stronger sense of community and play a valuable role in our cherished democracy.

Thank you for the work you do each day to provide needed support to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,  
Elsa Loftis  
President, Oregon Library Association 2016-2017