

President's Update - January 14, 2016

Today's topic is the value of professional associations, specifically the value of active participation in said associations. I'm reflecting on this topic for two reasons. First, a student and I are going to present on the topic in a few weeks as part of Northern Michigan University's Student Leader Fellowship Program. Second, SB 571 highlights the need for Michigan Library Association as a place to bring together our voices.

As I frame my thoughts to share with undergraduates, I'm reflecting on why I am active in my professional association and why they should be too. There are pragmatic career reasons, of course. The students should look at involvement with a professional association as a great way to build a resume and a professional network. Participation on a committee, especially in a leadership role, will help them demonstrate skills and growth.

In my case, the career need is even more direct because I work at a university library. Academics, regardless of discipline, are often expected by their institutions to engage in scholarship and service. Service can take many forms, including service to the department, to the university, to the community or to the profession. Service is frequently required for promotion and tenure.

I will tell the undergraduates that professional associations help us stay current with respect to important issues and trends. We need to go to conferences, read newsletters and subscribe to email lists. We need to hear what is happening in order to prepare for the future.

At this point in my career, though, I have lots of options for building my resume, getting leadership experience and learning about trends and issues. At this point, those are okay reasons to be in a professional association, but they don't have the same impact they did early in my career.

This brings us back to the second reason for reflecting on the value of professional associations – SB 571. Although we weren't able to stop the governor from signing it into law, we were able to make our voices – our strong, clear voices – heard. We were able to have support from MLA's fantastic staff and we were able to work with EveryLibrary. We couldn't have done what we did as individuals. We came together as an association, and we were heard. As an

association we will continue to work toward allowing libraries to provide factual information to our communities.

In short, I actively participate in Michigan Library Association because I owe it to everyone who helped me get to where I am today. I owe it to the people who built the library profession as one recognized for its integrity. I owe it to all the students who are coming up in the profession. I owe it to myself to make an impact on our community – not just passively accept what happens around me.

[Back to news](#)