

## President's Update - May 12, 2016

I recently had the honor of being part of Michigan's delegation to National Library Legislative Day. This was my first time participating and I expect it won't be my last. Representing Michigan libraries on Capitol Hill was rewarding on both personal and professional levels. I learned several things that are worth sharing.

*What happens in D.C. impacts all types of libraries and our communities.* The event reinforced the direct relationship between what happens in Washington, D.C., and what happens in Michigan. Our access to the Michigan eLibrary (MeL) databases, depends on the appropriation for Library Services and Technology Act, for example. Likewise, all of us could benefit from the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR) and the Equal Access to Congressional Research Service Reports Act passed, both of which would provide public access to taxpayer-funded research.

*Advocacy is easy.* American Library Association made sure that each of us had support regarding the key issues. The first day was spent learning about the issues, asking questions and becoming comfortable with advocacy best practices. ALA also provided us with a packet of issue briefs that we could leave at each legislative office we visited.

*Capitol Hill offices are not scary.* Congress was not in session, so most elected officials were out of town. We mostly met with staff members. The congressional staffers listened to us, asked questions and took notes. They welcomed the input from their constituents. They did not argue, debate or minimize our input.

*It's not too late to contribute.* The issues identified by ALA are still active. You can learn more about them at [www.ala.org/nlld](http://www.ala.org/nlld) . I encourage you to read the issue briefs and follow up with your elected officials.

*We are strong because we work together.* We visited the legislative offices in teams, which allowed us to share stories that illustrated broad impact of the proposals, especially those that require appropriations. I want to thank Deb Biggs, Michigan eLibrary & Outreach Coordinator at the Library of Michigan, for her work coordinating the visits to Capitol Hill and planning teams to accommodate complex travel schedules. I also want to thank Roger Mendel, director of

Northland Library Cooperative. As a newbie to NLLD, I appreciated the opportunity to team up with someone with NLLD experience.

Please consider participating in person or virtually next year. There are scholarships available to support a limited number of librarians, as well as an award to support a non-librarian supporter.

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